BERKELEY, CALIFORNIA

THE GIFT OF

CHARLES WILLIAM WENDTE

OF BOSTON, MASSACHUSETTS

C. P. Wadsworth
1878

List of Sermons

God is Spirit,
God is Love,
Flowers and Graves
Religion the Poetry of Life
Modern Idolatry
The Puritan Spirit
a Plea for Amusement
Why go to Church
Saintliness
The Disposal of our Dead
Goodness a Happiness
Charity and the Poor
The Devout Life

GOD IS SPIRIT.

A

SERMON,

BY

REV. O. B. FROTHINGHAM,

GRADUATE THEOLOGICAL UNION
LIBRARY
1962

PRACHED IN

LYRIC HALL,

SIXTH AVENUE, BETWEEN FORTY-FIRST AND FORTY-SECOND STREETS,

Property of
CBSK
Please return to
Graduate Theological
Union Library

NEW YORK:
D. G. FRANCIS, 17 ASTOR PLACE.

1871

935 g

REV. O. B. FROTHINGHAM,

Residence, No. 50 West Thirty-sixth St.

TRUSTEES.

OLIVER JOHNSON, *President.*
MERRITT TRIMBLE,
HENRY T. BROWN,
HENRY J. NEWTON,
JOHN H. CHEEVER,
JOHN W. BIGELOW,
JOHN H. NICHOLS,
CHARLES WATROUS,
CALVERT VAUX.

PUBLICATION COMMITTEE.

OLIVER JOHNSON,
WILLIAM H. WOODMAN.

TREASURER.

MERRITT TRIMBLE,
21 Platt Street.

SECRETARY.

GEORGE W. MILLAR,
Office, No. 10 Spruce St.

Digitized by the Internet Archive
in 2025

https://archive.org/details/godisspirit0000revo

GOD IS SPIRIT.

God is Spirit—John iv. 24.

Not, God is *a* Spirit, but God is spiritual, is essentially Spirit, is Spirit itself. The passage does not describe God's rank among beings of the same nature with Himself, but His own nature in its substance. To say that God is *a* Spirit, is merely to say that He is one of many. To say that God is Spirit, is to say that He is the root and ground of all intellectual and moral existence.

We must note the difference between the conceptions of God in the first gospel and in the fourth. The God of Matthew is the Jehovah made human by the loving heart; an individual Being of personality, sharply defined, of clearly marked attributes, thinking, feeling, purposing, sustaining strictly moral relations with His creatures. The "ancient of days," the creator and governor of the world, becomes a tender parent. He is called Father, heavenly; that is, gracious, compassionate Father. The austerity is gone from His expression; His countenance is benignant; His

eyes melt with pity; His arms are outspread in welcome and benediction; He watches, protects, pardons; He paints the lilies, colors the grass, sustains the sparrows, numbers the very hairs of the head. His care of the world is personal and immediate. His providence is more than particular and minute—it is "special."

In the fourth gospel, Deity wears another aspect. He is Jehovah no longer. The individuality is quite gone. The personal traits have disappeared. He withdraws into a remoteness, not of shadow, but of light. He no longer thinks—He is Thought. He no longer loves—He is Love. He no longer enlightens—He is Light. Of his direct relation to His creatures, nothing is said. No affectionate names are applied to Him. No affectionate sentiments are entertained towards Him. God is Spirit, or, to read it backwards, Spirit is God.

Between these two conceptions there lies a wide interval of thought—all the distance that separates Judea from Greece, Jerusalem from Athens, the realm of sentiment from the realm of philosophy.

In the earliest ages, God was thought of as a being of colossal proportions and solid bulk, a mighty man, and not after the most refined human model. The attributes He shared with humanity were such as the common humanity exhibited; not therefore the highest qualities of intellect or of heart. He was endow-

ed with material form, or at all events, was able to clothe Himself with a material form on proper occasions. He was tangible, visible, audible. Even the Hebrew Bible, which does not present the crudest conceptions of deity, by any means, describes Him thus. Abraham sees Him, converses with Him, entertains Him in his tent. Jacob wrestles with Him at midnight, and bears life-long mark of the struggle in a dislocated thigh. Samuel hears His voice as he lies in bed, and to repeated calls, makes answer. Other instances similar in character are familiar to all the readers of the Old Testament, and though they should not perhaps be interpreted too literally, still they betray the innocent child-like conception of unreflecting people.

In the New Testament, God is no longer tangible or visible, but He is audible. At the baptism of Jesus, a voice from the "opened" heavens calls attention to the beloved Son; the same voice bears testimony out of the bright cloud that overshadowed the disciples on the Mount of Transfiguration. In the gospel of John, it is recorded that a voice from heaven responded to Christ's prayer that the Divine Name might be glorified, in the words, "I have already glorified it: I will glorify it again." But the people that stood by said that it thundered; others said, an angel spoke to him. They were slow to believe that God could speak. Except among uneducated people, these conceptions have

passed away. The belief is still prevalent among Christian people that God was visible, audible and tangible once, in very remote times and places; but that they expect no such palpable manifestations now, and that they are afraid to look too closely into the ancient reports of them, proves that the faith in such things has died away.

A faint relic of the old superstition lingers in the popular form of speech that describes conscience as the "voice of God in the soul." If this language is held to mean that God reveals Himself to the moral instead of the animal sense, that the moral law is His witness, that if He is to be sought anywhere, it must be in the profoundest convictions of truth and duty, the language, though obscure, may be accepted as a not very felicitous way of saying that God is a moral, and not a material Being. But if the idea be conveyed, as it usually is conveyed, that the individual conscience receives immediately and reports accurately the will of God, the statement must not pass unchallenged. It is one thing to say that Divine revelations are to be sought only in conscience; it is quite another thing to say that each or any private conscience is a Divine revelation. If each conscience were at all times consistent with itself, always made the same report, always gave the same testimony, always reproved and always commended the same actions, always re-

sponded to the same calls, always rung true to the same convictions, always held up the same holy standard; if conscience were a distinct organ, if the multitude of consciences were in unison, so that the "moral sense" of the multitude of mankind rolled along a steady volume of sound, strong as the thunder, sweeping as the wind, there would be a show of reason in the assertion. But conscience is far enough from deserving or claiming to be anything like this. It is not consistent in its utterances; it is not harmonious. What men call conscience, is often another form of prejudice, or ignorance, or wilfulness, or stupidity, or passion; frequently, it is a compound of all together. It sometimes answers to good feeling; more rarely to right reason; less often still to noble principle. Not many times does it deserve to be called the voice of kindness. How many times can it be honestly called the voice of God? The bishop of Exeter, Frederick Temple, says with point, "Conscience is the supreme interpreter, whom it may be a duty to enlighten, but whom it can never be a duty to disobey." But an interpreter cannot be supreme whom it is a duty to enlighten, and there is a wide difference between the negative duty never to disobey, and the positive duty to hearken to an oracle of God. There is hardly room to doubt that the phrase, "voice of God in the soul," is commonly regarded now, by intelligent people, as a figure of

speech like that other popular phrase, "the bell in the heart."

Thus do our conceptions of God become more intellectual and spiritual as the ages go on, and the finer intelligence insists on its requirements. The crudeness is refined away. The anthropomorphitism, to use an ugly but familiar word, is corrected. Rational notions break through the mists and vapors that lie near the ground of popular apprehension, and as they ascend, vindicate themselves and disperse the vapors. Jeremy Taylor's often-quoted simile comes again to mind: "As when the sun, approaching towards the gates of the morning, first opens a little eye of heaven, and sends away the spirits of darkness, and gives light to a cock, and calls up the lark to matins, and by and by gilds the fringes of a cloud, and peeps over the eastern hills, thrusting out his golden horns like those which decked the brow of Moses; and still, while a man tells the story, the sun gets higher, till he shows a fair face and a full light, and then he shines the whole day, under a cloud often, and sometimes weeping great and little showers"— so does this bright, illuminating idea of God declare itself with steady power and victorious effulgence. But unlike the sun, which, having shone a whole day, then sets quickly, this "day spring from on high" illumines the world with never-failing beams.

But as the conception of God has gained in spirituality, it has gained in vitality. The God who is Spirit, inaudible, invisible, impalpable, has become to our apprehension intensely real, the soul of reality, the life of life—because in no particular place, therefore in all places; because in no special time, therefore in all time; because apparent under no peculiar forms of manifestation, therefore apparent under all forms of manifestation; because associated with no phenomena, therefore known as the power that works beneath all phenomena.

And this great discovery and demonstration of a spiritual God we owe directly to science, which has been so flippantly accused of materialism. This discovery and demonstration, I say. The spiritual God had been felt after and felt before; the fingers of faith had touched Him; the musing of meditation had been in communication with Him; the aspiring mind had soared towards Him; the devout heart had dreamed of Him and sent up to Him the incense of its adoration —but He had not been discovered and demonstrated, according to our modern notions of these words, till science came upon His very track, and found proof and illustration of His presence where it had least been suspected. No doubt this proof and illustration were found in the most rudimental shape. This was necessary in the nature of the case; and the fact that it was

so is most assuring and consoling. We wanted the evidence, not of faith or of feeling, but of knowledge. The conviction needed was not that entertained by the mystic, or declared by the prophet, or authenticated by the seer—conviction that had to be received on their authority. The conviction needed was one that could be appreciated by the working understanding as the result of investigation, the fruit of research and analysis. These are the instruments that science uses, and it is by these that she has achieved her fine work.

The first and most fundamental assertion made by science is the omnipresence, the omnipotence of force, acting on the primordial elements of the world. To this science has come; in this all her sons without exception agree, and this conception is purely spiritual. The nature of the force baffles investigation. What it is, none may tell; how it came to be, none may conjecture. It is not in any sense a material thing. It is not a person; yet it acts on all matter, and it possesses all the natural attributes that have been ascribed to God. It is single and insoluble. It is ubiquitous without being seen; omnipotent without violence; imminent in the universe, yet permanent throughout it; it is the animating principle, the connecting bond, the soul of all relations between things. It is the very expression, the very embodiment or incarnation

of will: will, blind and crude, as at first it seems, but capable of infinite expansion in purpose and determination.

For this force cannot be thought of, is not anywhere thought of except as associated with tendency. It operates along well-laid courses by a certain law of development or principle of evolution; its method is that of cause and effect, one thing leading to and leading from another, fact being strung to fact, phenomenon accounting for phenomenon, the parts forming wholes, the separate wholes composing one whole, seemingly distinct forces resolving themselves into the same force, so that now it is found difficult to avoid the conclusion that there is fundamentally but one natural force, which manifests itself under different modes. In fact, we have had no adequate conception of infinite Will until now, when the metaphysician is dumb, and the naturalist, the astronomer, the geologist, the chemist speak. We know what has been going on for millions of years is going on now, and will continue to go on probably for millions of years more, under the impulse and direction of power to which we cannot help ascribing all the lower, all the more rudimental attributes of Deity.

And ascribing the lower attributes, can we avoid ascribing the higher? Do not the rudimental ones imply the rest? Force is demonstrated; tendency is

demonstrated; determination is demonstrated. These imply direction and point to purpose. There can be no purpose without intelligence. We are compelled to ascribe thought to that which has tendency, direction and determination; and the thought must be commensurate with these, as strong, as wide, as far-reaching, as forecasting and continuous. It must deserve the name of Wisdom. The spirituality ascends to higher and purer degrees. The difficulty we encounter when we try to think of God as a mind, a difficulty that fairly baffles and oppresses us, arises from the vast *quantity* of mind. A little mind we can appreciate; and it is as a comparatively small, at all events as a limited mind, that ordinary people think of God. They succeed in holding Him to His personality and detaining Him within reach of their unspiritual faith by supposing Him to think and plan and meditate and direct just as they do; better than they do, but substantially in the same way. Thus, to make God intellectual, they limit His operations; to secure His personality, they unspiritualize Him. For that is precisely what we do when we fasten on Him our own mental conditions. A spiritual Deity cannot exercise intelligence after the fashion of even the most ingenious mechanic. The human frame is already beyond our most exalted conception of contrivance. We can form to ourselves no clear idea of

an intellect that could originally plan and fashion the human eye or ear, say nothing of the human brain. The thought expressed in these organizations far transcends the activity which we call thought, namely, the effort of an individual brain. Plato and Bacon were marvels of mind. Yet Plato and Bacon were creations. Shakespeare is reputed a miracle of intelligence, one of the vast exceptional minds whose lineage cannot be traced, whose capacities cannot be measured. The greatest intellects toil after him, and are grateful if they can find the key to one of his tragedies. But Shakespeare was a creation. The intelligence that shot a beam forth in Shakespeare, that set that single candle in its place, that touched with passing flame that torch —who shall dare to speak of its operations? Who shall venture to produce the key to one of its chambers? There was more wisdom spent in the fashioning a single cell in Shakespeare's brain than went to the making of all Shakespeare's dramas. As the ocean to a flake of foam, so is the mind of the universe to the finest individual intelligence. But does Mind become non-existent when it becomes untraceable? Does the ocean disappear when we are out of sight of the shore? The spectrum decomposes the sunbeam; but the sunbeams fell upon the earth ages before the spectrum was thought of.

Thus God is spiritual as Mind. Every drop of water is full of it. The atom that floats in the sunbeam betrays its presence. Our bodies are temples of it. The particles that compose our bodies move and act in accordance with its laws. To say that it recognizes everything and takes note of everything, is feeble. It finds expression in everything, it is by everything exhibited.

The conception of Spirit is not exhausted yet. Another inference is to be drawn. The perfect mind must be perfectly even and true. It cannot slip, or halt, or turn aside from its aims. Its logic must proceed steadily on without gap or weakness. Its justice must be equal to its scope; everywhere an even scale, a firm balance, an exact rendering of dues, a delicate compensation, neither too much nor too little. No neglects, or oblivions, or slights, or partialities, but fair measure for all and each, with no ground for complaint or criticism. The perfect attributes of justice and kindness must characterize the perfect mind. In view of it, all must be right, now, at every instant, in every spot. God is more than true—He is Truth; more than loving—He is Love. Again, the immensity confounds us. We can no more decompose the Divine kindness than we can analyze the Divine wisdom. We can no more pick out the separate benefactions, than we can pick out the separate thoughts. Our no-

tions of justice and kindness are at fault continually. We should have done things very differently. The world to us looks crooked and cruel. Some call it the worst possible world, because it does not run according to their calculations. And some call it the best possible world, not because it does run according to their calculations, but because they have a suspicion that if it does not, the fault may be in their calculations. It is hard to prove the goodness of particular things, and they who try, as many do try, to find benignity in every event, make queer work of it. But what is our conception of justice or of goodness but a little flickering spark from a greater source? There have been surpassingly good men in the world, prodigies of goodness, intepreters and exemplars of goodness to generations of mankind; but they were creations. Christendom consents to accept Jesus as the supreme authority in the quality of Love, and very few would set up their idea of goodness in comparison with His. Yet Jesus did not exhaust goodness: He was a creation, or if that be questioned, He was an emanation from the realm above. If Jesus was heavenly, what must Heaven itself be? If He was lovely, what must Love itself be? Does the candle extinguish the orb of light? Father Newman, in his "Apologia," writes, "The light of the world is nothing but the prophet's scroll, full of lamentation and mourning and woe."

But in the next breath he announces that revelation has cleared all up, so that it is the most perfect world after all. For whence came the revelation, if not from the world's author? And what does the revelation disclose but the fact that the world is not full of lamentation and mourning and woe, but only seems so to those who do not know how to distinguish appearance from reality, and have no notion what essential goodness may be?

Thus the attributes of the Supreme Spirit are established. Thus God is seen to be Spirit, and, as Spirit, to be Power, Wisdom, Truth, Justice; Love in purest form. Being not *a* Being to be described, talked about, dogmatized about; but Being itself to be meditated on, adored, trusted in with child-like affection.

Having now set forth as plainly as I could the significance of the doctrine, that God is Spirit, let me briefly point out some of the practical advantages to be expected from this view.

In the first place, and obviously, it relieves religion and worship of the local character that has so long and so stubbornly been attached to them. The Supreme Being is no longer supposed to be attached, almost identified, with times and places, with countries, buildings, books, ceremonies, orders of men. To outgrow this error, would be to outgrow sectarianism,

dogmatism and even superstition; for all these ugly things grow from one root—the idea, namely, that God is not Spirit, but *a* Spirit—an individual person, limited as other individuals are by the conditions of space and time—*visiting the world now and then, but not living in the world all the time.* To this base conception we owe the older statutes that decreed special penalties against sacrilege, the defilement of "sacred" places, the injury or theft of "sacred" property. To this we owe such superstitions as these: that evil deeds done in a church are more heinous than the same deeds would be if done elsewhere; that crimes against ministers of the gospel are peculiarly infamous; that churches must be consecrated to "sacred" uses, and would be desecrated by any others; that Sunday is the Lord's day, in an exceptional sense; that on Sunday, libraries must be closed, and art galleries and places of instruction; that no worldly work must be done then, and no worldly amusement allowed; that the Bible is God's Word, as no other book is or can be; and that reading the Bible is well pleasing in God's sight, above any other reading, however instructing and improving. To this conception of God we owe the strange views of history, and of the government of the world, that have prevailed for so long, and are now such a reproach to reason. To this we owe the stubborn adhesion to theories of miraculous interfer-

ences with the universal order, and of supernatural relations of the Divine will, which are such a discredit to knowledge and philosophy.

This habit of associating God with buildings and places and hours in special days, would be exceedingly disastrous were its effects confined to the mischief of attaching Deity to localities. It is bad enough to shut God up in temples, to confine His activity to a few spots, and His presence to a small group of people. But this is but a part of the wrong done by conceiving of Him as *a* Spirit who comes and goes, instead of conceiving of Him as Spirit who is at once everywhere and in all things. It is a calamity that God should be limited to a few places and seasons. It is a still graver calamity that all other places and seasons, those in which He is supposed not to be, should rest under the ban of outlawry, and be regarded as unhallowed. If God can be thought of as being anywhere in particular, the places where He is *not*, must be more or less despised. If one day in the seven is His, the other six will be made over to the spirits of evil. If one house is His, the other houses where men live, and rear families, and work, and enjoy, and suffer, will be dishonored in human regard, if not by human conduct. If His word is written in one book, the rest of literature is degraded to a mean position, and an insult is put upon the human mind which gives birth to science,

history, philosophy, poetry and art. The intellectual powers of man are deprived of their dignity, and are treated as if they were unworthy and incapable of employing themselves about any noble work. If any man or order of men are His representatives, what becomes of the great multitude of mankind who are made exceptions, and are left out of account when He is thought of? They fall at once to the level of menials. They are among the subjects. They are outcasts.

I am describing no superstitions of the past, no outworn habits or usages out-grown. This evil of worshiping *a* Spirit, of crowding about a local and temporary God, is still existent and strong; nor is it very steadily or certainly on the decrease. The pressure of "worldly" activities of every kind tends to crowd religion into its own corner, and to keep it in its own house, about its own ceremonial business. The increase of wealth conspires with this tendency, by making the ceremonial business rich, by beautifying the consecrated house, decorating the priests, gilding the altar, and accumulating upon the Lord's exceptional day all that worldliness can bring. Ritualism, which takes the old idea of the local God in the most literal sense, and connects it with colors, lines, vestments, postures, cloths and candles, in the most fanciful manner, is the pet piety of wealth and fashion. It owes

its existence and spread much to the tastes and necessities of a gaudy world, which is as much interested to make the Lord's day and place splendid, as it is to make its own days and places magnificent. It would not on any account allow the purifying and sanctifying Spirit to meddle with its festivities, but it will provide a weekly festival for the Being who so faithfully keeps His own place. The golden honors paid to an individual Spirit are fatal to the service of those high qualities of intelligence and goodness which constitute Spirit itself.

Utterly miserable and deplorable is this state of withdrawal and abandonment. That the Divine Spirit should be banished outright from warehouse and workhouse, from store and ship, from street and public square, from laboratory, museum, school-room and lecture-hall; that on secular days, when men are acting out the laws of their nature, and fulfilling the conditions imposed on them by their mundane existence, God should be regarded in the light of an absentee—is bitterly lamentable. All living people, all living interests suffer from this cause. Education, literature, art, all are sufferers. Commerce, finance, trade, manufactures feel the disabling spell. The new doctrine would portend nothing less than a revolution in the ways of mankind; for it would impart a new motive power to all affairs.

The laws that provide for the physical welfare of men and women would be clothed with a new authority. The care of the bodily health would not be left to hap-hazard as it is now,—being wholly neglected or being ignorantly and empirically discharged as sudden and crying occasions call, nothing being done at all till disobedience renders action imperative, and then the action taken being fitful and peevish. The preservation and the increase of health would be regarded as most sacred duties to be performed, under the most solemn sense of responsibility, and with a consecrated fidelity to regulations, in the observance of which the holy constitution of the moral universe is involved. Ignorance of them should be as culpable as was aforetime ignorance of the Bible or the Creed; and willful neglect of them should be chargeable as sin against the beneficent decrees of heaven, as an offence against the Word made flesh in each organized human being. If God be simply *a* Spirit, a special sacredness may attach to a few chosen incarnations. If God be Spirit, the same sacredness must attach to all incarnations; nor that only—the actual power and wisdom and love of Deity must be expressed and organized in the arrangements by which these incarnations are rendered complete and beautiful. There is devoutness in their observance. To know them, is to penetrate the secret of wisdom. To observe them,

is to submit the will to the Supreme. The proper rearing of children is a religious act. The regulation of food and sleep and exercise; the habit of abstinence from poisonous drugs, from wasteful indulgence of the appetites, from intemperance, dissipation and all licentiousness, should be regarded as a Sabbath obligation, an observance becoming to people who dwell in sanctuaries. To some, language like this sounds extravagant. But that is merely because they have been so long accustomed to dissociate the thought of God from all laws but those that concern the altar, the priest and the rubric. The new domestication of Spirit, that is of divine intelligence and goodness, in the organic world, will make the old ideas seem more grotesque and chimerical than this I have been advancing. Our incredulity is the creature of our atheism, and is precisely commensurate with it.

Domestic life has lain under the same ban, and has suffered from the same demoralization. The criticism to be made on it is, that it makes no part of the vitally religious life, but is given over to whim and caprice, to etiquette and conventionality, to vulgar ambitions and petty pride, and any other false and malicious spirit that cares to direct its course. The care of the children, the occupations and amusements of the adults, the relations between the brothers and sisters, the example and behaviour of the parents, the econo-

mics of the household, the mother's habits, manners, demeanour, modes of speech, the father's bearing, language, deportment, are usually regarded as open to criticism indeed, but from the circle to which they belong, rather than from the heights of intelligence, or of goodness. They hold themselves amenable to the bar of public propriety and the rules of conventional decency, but not to any high standard of moral duty.

Religion approaches domestic life from the outside through its ministers, who urge the necessity of family prayers and a regular reading of the Bible to the household and in private. The importance of a due amount of indoctrinating and catechising is insisted on; an occasional exhortation is thrown in, to avoid excessive worldliness. But how commonly is it intimated that the relations of the family themselves declare and express the divine kindness—that the faithful discharge of them is religion, that the mere neglect of them is irreligion; that God needs not to be introduced to them, for they are a development of His being—nor to be imported into them, for He is already there; that to make home-life sweet, is better than learning the Bible by heart; and to keep the domestic ties unbroken and unstrained, is more than the most assiduous prayers. When the minister shall say: this devotion to one another, is true devotion; this study one of another's happiness, this reading one of

another's characters and dispositions, is study and reading of the divine word; this loyal sympathy and affection, is living communion with the living Spirit; instead of hoping to put sanctification into the domestic world, you must get sanctification out of it; when the minister of religion shall say this, justice will be done to the idea that God is Spirit, and that idea will do justice to the arrangements of family life.

The same regenerating influence would be felt throughout society at large. So long as religion shall look on society as a crude seething mass of human beings that must be animated from above, electrified or inspired by the church, converted, redeemed by ordinances; so long as the conception of "social laws" is scouted as atheistical by the spokesmen of the Almighty; so long as they who believe in the social laws, who endeavor to understand and apply them, who profess belief in social science, and have faith that humanity contains in itself all that is needful for its own development; so long as these are counted "infidels"—just so long will the condition of the social world be chaotic and hopeless. The religion that speaks in the name of the God who is *a* Spirit, has vexed the surface of society with continual assault, and all in vain. It has plied it with warning, rebuke, expostulation and menace. Assuming it to be destitute of all power of self-recuperation or improvement, it has

lashed it with threats of hell and flattered it with hopes of heaven, fruitlessly striving to call it away from the spirits of darkness to the one Spirit of light. It has told the sinners they must be converted; it has called on the guilty to repent, the vicious to reform, the criminal to mend their ways, the reckless and passionate to bethink themselves of their situation in time. But the world has not obeyed, nor does it promise obedience.

The religion that speaks in the name of God who is Spirit refers men for salvation to the living organization of which they form a part; bids them learn by the study of history and political economy how that organization has worked and on what principles it moves; bids them discover by the study of social science what are the permanent conditions of its easy successful and harmonious action; charges them to look into society itself for the agencies by whose help poverty shall diminish and crime decrease, and suffering become lighter and violence cease; assures them that the social mechanism will justify itself the moment they trust it and give its enginery play; and admonishes them to bring into the field the living powers that come into existence under this very form of organized social life, of which they despair simply because they have taken no pains to understand it.

They who wish for a private God, a special and peculiar spirit to take note of them particularly and single them out for his favors, will object to this exposition that it deprives God of His personality and leaves the poor soul afloat on a shoreless sea. But if the sea be an ocean of live mind, whose currents are intentions, whose tides are purposes in their eternal systole and diastole, whose billows are moving masses of intellectual impulse, whose lightest foam-flakes are thoughts—the objection loses its weight. It is the same thing whether we press ourselves with intent application close to the embosoming Spirit, or whether the embosoming Spirit seeks out our particular need. So that mind touches mind, and heart communes with heart, why complain that we, and not God, must make the personal advance? The direct contact is the needful fact. How it is effected is immaterial. The child playing with cockle-shells on the bank of a creek laughs at the rippling waves that sportively creep up to him and curl round his feet, and is not troubled by the thought that the ocean, whose vast expanse gleams in the distance, washes other shores, laughs on other sands, murmurs to other people, and curls caressingly about the feet of other children. It is within his reach when he wants it, and it gives him all he wants. I do not ask that the fountain shall be interested in me. I am satisfied and grateful if it

will fill my little cup when I bring it in the heat of the summer's day. Should I not feel a deeper satisfaction and a humbler gratitude in remembering how, with equal readiness and the same kind carelessness, it quenches the thirst of farmers and their cattle, and revives the green of a hundred meadows? The more the Spirit is essential, the more essential it is to me; the more vital, the more accessible.

If any object to the doctrine that it is bleak and chilling, I simply confess myself unable to understand what they mean. They say they want a God who is loving, not a God who is love. Do they wish to be spared themselves the sweet duty of loving? Is it too much to ask that they shall open the window that the air may come in, that they shall draw aside the curtain that the sunbeams may enter, that they shall unbolt the door to the heavenly guest? Is it unfair to demand response from the human side? It would seem to be a small matter that one should step to the spring with his pitcher, or should dig the small channel by which the abounding tide of benefit shall refresh the drooping flowers of his private affection, and make the sunlit fountains leap in the desert of his own heart. The thing needed to make intensely loving the God who is love is that we shall meet His omnipresence with our advance. There will then be no complaint of untenderness on His part.

The God who is Spirit is the soul of tenderness always.

The want of the age is a living God. James Martineau, in an eloquent passage, says: "The great change for which the secret religiousness of the age pines, and which it is sorely straitened till it can accomplish, is the deliberate adoption into 'heavenly places' of this world, its faculties and affairs, just as God has made them, and man's unfaithfulness has not yet spoiled them." The saying is as profound as it is eloquent. But there is a deeper saying still: The "heavenly places," as well as the heavenly powers that fill them, are to be found in those very faculties and affairs, and only wait for us to seek them there.

GOD IS LOVE.

A

SERMON

BY

O. B. FROTHINGHAM,

PREACHED IN

LYRIC HALL,

SIXTH AVENUE BETWEEN FORTY-FIRST AND FORTY-SECOND STREETS

DECEMBER 1st 1872.

NEW YORK:
D. G. FRANCIS, 17 ASTOR PLACE.
1872

GOD IS LOVE.

1. John iv: 8. He that loveth not knoweth not God: for God is Love.

Not God is loving: but God is love. That is to say, in the same words, Love is God. The writer does not assert the common place that love is one of the divine attributes; he is not content to affirm even that love is the supreme attribute of divinity. Love, he means to declare, is the divine characteristic, the ground and substance of all attributes, the essence and soul of deity. When we turn, rapt and glowing, from the lessons of this fine chapter, to the language of the preceding chapter, our minds receive a chill. For there it is written, "Who is a liar but he that denieth that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh? He is antichrist. Whosoever denieth the Son, the same hath not the Father. He that committeth sin is of the devil; for the devil sinneth from the beginning." This frank admission of a world of darkness and lies presided over by a potentate of its own, inhabited by "children of the evil one," heirs of eternal death, far excelling in number strength knowledge and power, the select few who are "born of God," sadly narrows and fatally qualifies the first grand state-

ment. God is not God in the infinite sense, nor is his love, in any sense, infinite. He is the deity of a limited world. He displays his goodness by snatching people out of the world, giving them grace to overcome the lust of the flesh and the lust of the eyes and the pride of life, and permitting them to be called the sons of God. His love consisted in the mission of his Son to recover men out of darkness into light. "Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that he loved us and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins." "Hereby perceive we the supreme love because he laid down his life for us." When the "Christian" speaks of the divine love, he dwells on the great work of redemption, a work the whole impressiveness glory and significance of which come out in strong relief against the blackness of a world overshadowed by the wings of Satan. The love of God balances the hate of the devil, and is the more touching as that is the more appalling.

Theodore Parker used to say that the Christian's God was not a Trinity, but a quaternity, the fourth person in the Godhead being Satan; the saying is witty and would be true if Christians did not adopt the manichean theory of two infinites, one good and the other evil, the true God representing the good principle only. But let this pass. I have no wish to spend words on theological questions. I mention the

belief in the existence of the devil, merely that I may call attention to its bearing on this matter of the divine love. The vindication of God's love is very easy to those who hold Him in no wise responsible for the unlovely features of creation, who make the universe of suffering disease sorrow and sin over to another power, and think of God as waging with him ceaseless warfare for the souls of men. It is no hard task to demonstrate the goodness of God when you ascribe to Him all the goodness there is, and throw off on his adversary all the evil that can be thought of. That is simply cutting the knot instead of untying it; it is eluding the question instead of answering it: covering up one whole side of creation.

To the Unitarian, whether Hebrew Mohammedan or Christian, the labor of establishing the fact of the divine love is much more difficult, for his chief peculiarity consists in a denial of the devil. The one God is a whole God, comprehensive, all-embracing, and sharing the dominion of the universe with no one; a true infinite taking in the full circle of sway, and manifesting his attributes not in a corner of the system but in every department fit. This being is answerable for everything that is. To him belong both realms, the realm of darkness and the realm of light, the dominion of evil and the dominion of good. Indeed to those who adore but one God there is no

realm of darkness, there is no dominion of evil. When they say "God is Love," they mean it in a profound exhaustive and absolute sense. They are convinced that love is the soul of things. This is the theme that Unitarians from the beginning have taken up according to their ability, and with ability proportionate to the breadth of their mental view. By dwelling on the loving aspects of the world till the other aspects of it seem subordinate or even pass out of sight; by resolving evil into imperfect good, calling it good in the making; by imputing moral purpose to the Maker, or by exalting the moral dignity of man, they push the lines of loveliness very far into the domain from which everything like loveliness had been excluded, and reclaim the wilderness of the world from the sand the rock and the thorn. They call attention to the fact that the whole universe so far as it has been examined, responds to the gracious scheme called the scheme of redemption; that the same Spirit that came down from the skies to bless the earth, blossoms from the earth and causes its fragrance to ascend to the skies.

It is superfluous they say, to dwell on the loveliness that everybody sees before him every day, or rather would see if it were less universal and less common; the air which keeps all animated creatures alive; the light without which we should all shrivel and die; the regenerating elements that conspire to pro-

duce fertility and increase life;—the sun at whose rising and setting, if we saw it but once in a year we should bow down in mute adoration;—the moon and stars

> Forever singing as they shine,
> The hand that made us is divine.

Go behind this gorgeous scenery; lift the starry curtain penetrate into the secrets of creation. Take kindly nature by the hand and let her lead you through her as yet almost untrodden by-ways; let her take you down into the abyss of the sea where the fishes small and great play in the laughing water.

> Where the sea snakes coil and twine
> Dry their mail and bask in the brine;
> Where great whales come sailing by,
> Sail and sail, with unshut eye,
> Round the world for ever and aye.

Let her conduct you through the worlds within worlds of insect life, creeping crawling fluttering and spreading forth wings of a myriad hues; each kind having home mates friendship society prosperity; each ministered to by a providence so generous and so delicate that each particular beetle ant butterfly and spider seems to be the center and final cause of the whole creation. Follow her among the winged inhabitants of the air who seldom want a shelter and seldom miss a meal, nor are ever out of voice when their little bosoms overflow with God's praise. Go by her

side boldly, and visit the cold reptile which instinct bids us avoid; the shining snake stretched out on his warm stone in the sun—the speckled toad peacefully musing in his cell, harmless and homely as any hermit, thankful for his solitude, asking little and receiving all he asks for. Wander through the vegetable kingdom where flowers of every species from the queenly lily to the modest forget-me-not, without toiling or spinning, sewing or reaping, are dressed in garments more gorgeous than ever superb Solomon wore, and sip their cup of nectar each night and morning from their Father's hand. See the beneficent plants which we call poisons discharging their duty as caterers and physicians to animals of every grade from quadruped to man. Explore the mysteries of the human frame so fearfully and wonderfully made, with its mighty brotherhood of members and serviceable powers making every man's body a temple and kingdom on earth. Or mount the chariot of light, and speed over the trackless realms of the empyrean, into the thick of the "milky way," or to the distant outposts of creation where the last made star has just been launched into space to gladden mortal vision with its beams some ages hence. Wherever nature carries you listen with an attentive ear to the voices that address you, pause and listen, and from every point in the universe, from every spot where creatures animate

or inanimate have room to live, from the atom that floats in the sunbeam and from the planet that rolls in the remotest confines of the sky, the great chorus will come surging along, God is Love.

This is the bright side, now turn next to the dark side. There it is, a black mass that we cannot understand or clearly outline; which philosophy has never been able to reconcile with the perfect love of God, which depresses and chills and discourages us when we would fain turn towards him with a full heart of gratitude. There are shapes that scare the timid sight, blight and mildew, pain and want, poverty, sickness and misery. It is not surprising that they who fix their attention exclusively on these facts of wretchedness and crime, who live in the midst of them, inhaling their noxious atmosphere and confronting their deadly forms, should regard the earth as an infirmary or a dungeon, and man as an outcast doomed to penance for some past transgression. The most favored see the dense shadows that lie heavily on the surface of the most cultivated society; the happiest feel the deadly chill strike in moments to the heart.

The worshipper of the One God is not dismayed by the ghastly spectacle. To him the spots and shadows are hardly visible on the broad fields of light, and they are constantly diminishing as the sunshine spreads; to him evil is the occasional discord that is

needed to deepen and complete the world's eternal harmony; he perceives clearly that most if not all of the apparent evil of the world is caused by man himself and exists in simple defiance of nature's beneficent laws; he consoles himself with the thought that we are but children and can no better understand the ways of an infinite kindness than infants can comprehend all that their father and mother are planning and doing for them. Such thoughts bring the mind back to steady contemplations, and brace it for the final necessary effort to cast the evil spirit out of the universe.

That effort is made by taking the question up to a human level and pronouncing on it according to the demands of character. By what standard shall the divine love be measured? Shall we judge it by the sum of pleasant sensations bestowed on us, by our average of animal delight, exemption from pain, sickness, want or sorrow? Then certainly we shall never get at its secret. They who envy the butterfly or the bird, who wish to be loved like the beetle or the bee, have no notion whatever of the needs of a man. These tiny creatures are satisfied with their rose leaf and dew drop. They never question or complain. They do not know what higher creatures require. The thought that human creatures are loved, not as the lilie[illegible] are, or as the ore[illegible] that i[illegible] today in the field

and to-morrow is cast into the oven, but as moral beings whose food is truth, whose drink is goodness, whose garments are purity, whose happiness and splendor consist in the qualities they possess,—the thought that God loves us as children, furnishes the only key to the mystery of divine benignity. This thought breaks the blow of calamity, spreads lines of beauty over many a ghastly spot of existence, discloses friendly intents in untoward circumstances, and drops healing ingredients into bitterest cups. God loves us as children, not as pets, loves us as a tender but wise and true mother loves her child; not so fondly that she must give him every toy he asks for, and cannot refuse the sweetmeats for which the baby mouth is watering; but with a deep, earnest and anxious affection full of gentle reproofs and sweet corrections and saving austerities, an affection which the child is far enough from comprehending, which indeed he takes to be something the very reverse of affection, but which, if he grows up to be a man he will bless as the care that educated and redeemed his soul. The Supreme love is simply pledged to make men and women. When we discover that, and begin to become men and women under its discipline, then we shall be prepared to say "God is Love."

From the summit of this high conviction that the human creature is the end of creation, one looks down

in triumph upon the writhing world. Evil is no longer a thing to be apologized for; it is a necessity in creation. There could be no God's world without it. The whole creation groaneth and travaileth in pain, waiting for the manifestation of the sons of God, and if they arrive the groaning is prophecy and the travail is joy. The ages of development are justified that lead up to man. The ages of development are justified that lead from the savage man to the civilized, and from the civilized to the Christian. A single human quality is worth thousands of abortive experiments. The Hebrew history found its meaning in Jesus. A character like Washington was not purchased too dearly by the gloomy winters of the revolution. Whatever philosophy may say here, manhood has the argument.

Thus the Unitarian principle results in a noble optimism. It was in the spirit of it that Pope wrote the famous lines:

> All nature is but art, unknown to thee;
> All chance, direction which thou canst not see,
> All discord, harmony not understood;
> All partial evil, universal good.
> And spite of pride, in erring reason's spite
> One truth is clear, whatever is, is right.

The literal man is ready with his crushing objection to this sentiment. It is recorded that Dr. Johnson being asked what answer he could make to Berkley's

doctrine that thought was the only substance, that matter was but the shadow of mind, roared out in his furious way, Answer? The answer of a cudgel.—Lay a stick across his back. The reply satisfied Mr. Boswell, but it would not have satisfied Berkley; for the philosopher never said that he had no capacity for sensation; he simply said that the capacity for sensation did not necessarily imply eternal matter. In similar fashion the modern Dr. Johnson assails the doctrine of Pope, "You say that whatever is, is right. Let us see. Is it right that women should be the spoil of men? Is it right that the most disorderly and demoralized classes of the community should rule the rest? Is it right that crime should flourish in open day, that murderers should defy justice, that the courts of law should be presided over by men ignorant of jurisprudence and capable of taking bribes, that the public servants should be public plunderers, that the fortunes of honest men and unsuspecting women should be at the mercy of stock-gamblers, and should be played with on the street as children play with foot-balls? Is it right that the characters of good men should be blackened by irresponsible calumniators? Is it right that the press should be an organ for slander and abuse, that politics should be a gamester's trade? Is it right that the stronger nation or party should oppress the weaker? Is it right that religion should

be the most disturbing and ferocious spirit in society? Is poverty right? Is filth right? Are squalor and disease right?"

The objection looks crushing. Is it? Are these things which have been enumerated, *all there is?* Is this the whole story of providence? Behind these facts is the other equally valid fact, that *somebody pronounces them wrong.* The moral sentiment therefore is a fact. The sense of justice is among the things that are. The feeling of indignation against injustice, the feeling of obligation to protest against injustice, to bring it to trial to put it to confusion to cast it out of society, is among the things that are. The reformer exists; the discoverer, inventor, economist, philanthropist is part of the ordained system of things. You must not forget that the teacher the orator the prophet the writer are to be taken into account as parts of the creation, that vigilance committees and reform clubs have a veritable place and power in the constitution of things. If you are reckoning what is, you must reckon the force of combined resistance that makes head against the ugly conditions of life—the intelligent courage and commanding purpose which extract the better from the worse. Is not improvement a fact, progress, the successful push of man upward and onward?

All this is; and beneath this again is a "stream of

tendency" setting strongly towards order, law, civilization. That stream of tendency, that "causing stream" of thought is the greatest fact of all. Before all things, and beneath all things, that is. When we say, "Whatever is," we must not be oblivious that that is. And if that is, all else may be cheerfully accepted. Supplement Pope's lines with the line of the Greek poet:

"Whatever is, in its causes just,"

and the rounded statement carries conviction to the mind at once. Whatever is, is right. But many things which seem most bulky simply *are not, at all*. They are phenomena; they appear; but they vanish on near approach. The mistake consists in taking the apparition of a moment for a permanent fact. The permanent fact we never see; all that passes before our eyes is change, illusion, transition from one state to another. Nothing is finished; even truth and justice, pity and loving kindness are shifting their forms continually in the effort to take on more perfect shapes. God, said Hegel, is a process of becoming; so he is, as far as we can judge. He will be more to the next generation than he is to us; a thousand times more ages hence than he is to-day. *All things work together for good.* The good is to come; it is in the future; it is a-making in the laboratory of God. All things work together for good, to whom? Not to

everybody surely; not to the idler, the coward, the sneak. Tennyson trusts

> That nothing walks with aimless feet
> That not one life shall be destroyed
> Or cast as rubbish to the void
> When God shall make the pile complete.

But so far as we discern, millions of feet walk aimlessly and millions of lives perish after a fruitless passage over an inane existence. The prophet of the law of natural selection tells us what no prophet was needed to tell, that for one creature that survives myriads perish, that the strongest only survive. A similar law of selection holds in the development of the human family. There also only the strongest survive, but the strongest are those that hold hardest by principles, the lovers of truth and equity, the righteous, the humane. If it is objected that this is to make providence partial, it must be admitted that the order of the universe is partial to the orderly; not out of caprice or whim or arbitrary purpose but because they fulfil the conditions of success, and avail themselves of the advantages that come from an active co-operation with the living forces of the world. This is why good men believe as they do in God, clinging so tenaciously by their heart strings that nothing will detach them from their allegiance. What sermons they preach from the apostolic text!

No matter what the voluptuary says who in answer to his prayer for animal bliss receives a rotting carcass, and complains in his torment that God does not keep his word with his creatures; no matter what the man of the world says, who grumbles because providence baulks his desire for social pre-eminence; no matter what the surly critic says who cannot reconcile the order of things with his little scheme; hear what the good man says who gives love for love, and returns loyalty for loyalty. He is in a condition perhaps that would make the worldling an atheist, and fill the voluptuary's mouth with blaspheming, and yet the things that would drive another to infidelity knit him to faith. Sickness lays him low on a bed of pain, interrupts his business, disturbs his pleasure, flings him aside like a piece of drift wood; poverty narrows his lot, thins his clothing, puts out his fire, reduces his store; calamity pelts upon his naked head; affliction lays heavy stripes on him; human distrust and blame push him out of society and leave him deserted of his kind; but nothing extorts from him a cry of denial. The love he clings to is a quality that cannot express itself in any lustiness of bodily health, in any abundance of meat and drink, in any tranquillity or comfortableness of estate, in any holiday popularity which would be the richest boon in life to the peacock or the popinjay. The love he celebrates

can express itself only in the trial and development of virtue; it does its best when it converts pills and peaches into patience and power; it gives its best when it gives courage and resignation and humility and denial of self.

Only they see God who love God. Love comprehends love. Atheism will diminish as love increases, for atheism is not human. No great heart ever disbelieved in the heart of the world. An age of intellect may be an age of atheism, but an age of conscience cannot be. Whoever is conscious of possessing the supreme prerogative of manhood or womanhood has an inward witness of the supremacy of that quality. For God is simply a name we give to that fine principle which knits things together and builds things up with beauty; and that principle may be apprehended on every plane of existence. An enthusiastic German conceives the notion of converting men from their foolish ways by means of microscopic analyses. Look at this infinitesimal atom, he says, this water drop, eye lash, bit of beetle's wing, speck of dirt. Mark how complete its construction is, how every law of beauty and service is carried out there; what ranks of being, what conspiracy in work or play, what history and what prophecy of good! Is not the whole story there? Why not learn it there then, and learning it learn that everywhere the same law pro

duce the same results. I am persuaded that a fresh conviction of this truth, (a fresh conviction do I say? a true conviction of it is yet to dawn on mankind.) I am persuded that a hearty conviction of it is the only thing that will avail to repress wrong doing. To doubt that God is Love is that deadly doubt from which there is no recovery. To doubt, that is to doubt love altogether as a deep principle, and to doubt the principle of Love is to be a mental outcast. Intellectual atheism is a small matter, but the atheism of the heart chills the qualities that console mankind. The dread of atheism is instinctive. The smallest approach to it causes apprehension, for genuine atheism is disbelief in law, and disbelief in law is anarchy. But the revival of theism I look for will not come from any scientific demonstration, but from a revival of that faith in law which restores order to every department of the world.

This is a most practical question, and to get at its practical significance let us state the apostle's definition of God in another form. Put it thus: Love is God, and see whether a new light will not flash out on us. Love is God;—saying that we assume nothing but what all our hearts assent to and in advance of all speculation declare. Many will believe in the attribute, who will not believe in the Being. That God is Love may not be easy to show. That Love is

God may be made evident to all, and the two propositions come to the same thing. What is the divine power in the world? That is the question.

Is it Force? Many seem to think so; conspicuously Mr. Thomas Carlyle, whose worship of power, sublime and often beautiful as it is, sinks sometimes to the adoration of might. His glorification of Prussian Frederic is strongly of this nature. His deification of English Cromwell, though loftier in tone, partakes of the same character. The king is the man who can, and the man who can has rights eminent over the man who cannot. Mr. Carlyle has no pity to waste on the imbecile and impotent, and would gladly see them swept out of the world by the stern arms of implacable law. None shall live by their wits or have a chance to beg in his universe. Work or die is his maxim. His emblem of deity is the straight line which measures men by exact rule, and divides the sheep from the goats with unerring certainty. Hunger, pestilence, famine, sword are his ministers; the prison and the gallows are his agencies—he will have servitude for the Negro in the United States and the Indies -for the turbulent, subjection, for the rebellious, death. He is terrible as the force he adores.

And that is terrible indeed. It is the pitiless side of God. Black, sweeping, irresistible, turning aside for none, sparing none, burying cities like Thebes,

Athens, Rome, because they became luxurious and incontinent: making frightful examples of nations, ploughing into the soil empires like that of Cæsar, listening to no prayers, pausing for no repentance, dropping no explanations, it pushes on, a blind destiny, a remorseless fate. The multitude know of no God but this, the predestinator, the judge, the sovereign ruler and king. They grovel in superstitions before him; they copy his harshness in bloody legislation and emulate his cruelty in cruel punishments. It is the feeling that force is divine that makes weak people cowards and strong people brutes, and countenances the numberless atrocities that cripple and dwarf humanity. It is the conception of force as deity that drives men into atheism; for force has nothing elevating or ennobling in it; it converts nobody, it pacifies nobody, it satisfies no questioning, it softens no manners, it reconciles no differences, it assists no efforts at adjustment, it favors no interests, it secures no peace. If force be God, then liberty is at an end and civilization is destined never to attain its noblest proportions. Force is an attribute of God, but the telluric, demonic attribute which commonly goes by the name of the devil. It is still worshipped, worshipped more than any other, worshipped heartily in domestic and social life, in state and church, in civil and criminal jurisprudence, in manners and customs; and a frightful worship it is.

Very far is force from expressing the quality we call divine. To say that force is God is a most inadequate statement. Inadequate also is the statement that Thought is God. We rise now to a higher conception. The world of intellect and beauty is more glorious to contemplate than the world of brute power. But thought, knowledge, science, intelligence, do not convey the peculiar quality which we call divine. Love alone does that. The loving life is the divine life; the humane character is the God-like character. The beneficent force, the tender illumination, the power that aims to bless, the light that shines to guide and warm convey the intimate essence of deity. This is the Trinity, Power, Wisdom, Love; but Love is the centre. The feeble and unintelligent if loving dwell near the heart of things. When the intelligent and strong are loving the heart of things overflows, bursts out in fountains, rolls in rivers, glows in suns. The loveliness of Jesus made him to be regarded as a divine manifestation, and keeps him so in all hearts: till that loveliness be questioned, his place will not be taken from him.

Love is God. Let us hold fast to that in thought and purpose if we cannot in feeling, and whatever our limitations we shall communicate something of the divine principle. The mightier the love the better; the more enlightened the better; it must be

strong or it will effect nothing; it must be enlightened or it will run into sentimentalism enthusiasm and foolish mistakes. But through all the quality of love must be preserved, else the might will be brutal and the enthusiasm fanaticism. All faculties may minister to love to make it rich and great; but nothing can be a substitute for love. That alone communicates and reveals deity.

It will not, I hope, be thought strange if I pass from this level of thought to a remarkable life that has just closed its earthly course; or if I take that life as illustrating, not fully or with unmistakeable clearness indeed, yet in certain characteristic features the doctrine I have tried to present. Of the journalist and politician, they must judge who are more competent than I am. It is the spirit of a life that concerns us here more than the incidents of a life,—even more than the details of character. Of the personal qualities of Horace Greeley it will not become me to speak. Of few men will opinions differ more widely. It is never easy to discern character. Some fail by reason of an intimacy that blinds them to faults, and some by reason of a prejudice that blinds them to virtues. In the case of the public man both of these hindrances are vastly augmented. Few, if any, observe him judiciously. His intimates unconsciously become partisans who ascribe to him every cardinal

virtue; and his critics become enemies who deny to him the possession of any cardinal virtues whatever. His private qualities are to such an extent associated with his attitude as a politician his position as a reformer his discussions as a journalist, the sides he takes on disputed questions, the movements he favors, the interests he espouses, that he is as much a subject of controversy as his theories, and the battle rages as fiercely over his dispositions aims and intentions, as over the issues he joins himself with. Of such a one it should be said with even more than the usual solemnity, that his character must be left to the Searcher of Hearts. The drift of his public life is alone open to interpretation. True the quality of that will be disputed, but it is more fairly in dispute, for it is an open fact subject of course to different interpretations, but not subject to denial or question.

Speaking only for one, and asking myself seriously what I think about that, I am glad to be able to say that to me he always seemed a man who held that humanity was the test of divinity; a man who held that idea; not always gently or delicately, not always with the finest feeling or the subtlest perception, not always with the cultured breadth of interpretation, this was hardly to have been expected of him, but who held the idea earnestly, enthusiastically, resolutely,

He was no worshipper of force; he was no worshipper of knowledge; he was a worshipper of humanity. The rights of man were dearer to his heart than anything else. He was a natural republican, a born democrat, an honest lover of liberty, a devoted champion of social progress, an ardent advocate of the moral qualities that exalt mankind, a sturdy believer in the title the ability the responsibility of men to work out their own independence through industry, temperance, frugality, courage and faith. Of all the great cardinal reforms of the last generation he was a conspicuous champion. He pleaded for peace as a prime condition of civilization; for the abolition of slavery as indispensable to the political safety, the social harmony, the industrial prosperity of the country; for popular education as the instrument by which the people were to be equipped for their great task of establishing republican institutions on the basis of intelligence and self-respect; for complete religious liberty; the final and absolute divorce of religion from the state as the safeguard of a democracy, the guarantee of peace and purity, the sole security against the oppressive domination of sects, and the complication of temporal affairs with spiritual which has always proved so disastrous in its results on social progress. He wished all men—yes, and all women -to have an equal chance at the opportunities, as well as the labors cares

responsibilities of life. He would have all people to be every thing they were capable of becoming. So absolute was his hostility to despotism and restriction, so frank his confidence in freedom of thought, speech, endeavor, action, that with many he passed all his life as a visionary, a man of whims and vagaries. Even when his conduct seemed inconsistent with his principles, it would be found accordant with the spirit of practical humanity.

In religion he was a Universalist. He believed that all human creatures would at last be saved through the influence of the divine love. That was an early conviction of his; it came to his mind at its opening, grew with its growth, and strengthened with its strength; it was his natural faith, and the influence of it was discernible, I think, in some of the gravely questioned and severely criticized actions of his life. His efforts to avert the impending civil war by concessions that were regarded as dangerous disloyal and even craven, may be fairly ascribed to his hatred of sectional subjugation, his jealousy for the political liberty of States, and his horror of the sword. His boldness in presenting himself as bondsman for the appearance of Jefferson Davis proved, not his desire to shield a criminal, but his confidence in magnanimity. His advocacy of universal amnesty sprung from the same steady, deep, unshaken and unshakeable as-

surance that the generous policy would approve itself in the end as the wise one. His absolute willingness, nay, his impatient demand that the Southern white people should be freely admitted to the rights of citizenship, though by the verdict of his countrymen pronounced untimely and dangerous, evidenced less the visionary quality of his mind, the weakness of his judgment, or the looseness of his loyalty, than the hopefulness and openness of his heart. It was his belief that love only would win love; that evil could be overcome by good alone. The belief is not common, if it were he would have had a large following; the belief would have been a power.

I say these things from conviction. There are other things I might say; but these, it seems to me, are important to say. When a young man, prejudiced against some of the beliefs I now hold, Mr. Greeley taught me lessons of faith in human nature, stirred within me sentiments of kindness, interested me in movements of reform, suggested purposes of duty, and instructed me in matters of which, but for him, I might have remained deplorably ignorant. For this I thank him. Because he has done this same good work for multitudes, because he was always doing it, I mourn his loss as that of a public teacher and benefactor, a man of vast abilities, warm feelings, strong determination, a powerful stimulator of minds, a thinker

and a cause of thinking in others, who, after his own fashion and as well as he knew how, consecrated his gifts to the service of his fellow-men.

Less than a year ago he stood in the midst of a great and distinguished company, apparently in the full ripeness of physical and mental health. Now he has passed away. There are many who think that he owed his death to his devotion to the principles that shone conspicuously in his life. Incessant toil, as the standard-bearer of a movement which, though repudiated by his countrymen was dear to him, proved too much even for his uncommon strength of constitution. The excitements of a campaign more than usually ferocious in personality, tasked severely his nervous system. The storm of abuse ridicule and calumny that beat for months upon his head, was enough to crush a creature of sterner stuff. The culmination of it all in an overwhelming defeat, accompanied, as it must have been, with depression of mind discouragement and mortification, was a shock which the preceding months had poorly prepared him to meet. And at last came the prolonged watching by the agonized bedside of his dying wife.

We must judge men by the ruling spirit of their life. No life is finished in detail; no career is rounded and complete; every character has its flaw, that recal to us the saying that no chain is stronger than

its weakest link. If his chain gave way there ; if his enthusiasm carried him too far : if his trust in others or his confidence in himself betrayed him ; if ambition tempted him to forego present power for possible sway, and persuaded him that he should issue unscathed from the fiery furnace, let us try to remember that enthusiasm and trust are never contemptible, that self confidence is not necessarily foolish, that ambition, though it may be the vice of vulgar minds, may also be the infirmity of generous ones.

For every illustration of the truth that Love is Divine, not Force or Cunning or Diplomacy we should give hearty thanks. And if the illustration be incomplete, as all illustrations must be, the more occasion there is for us to bear in mind the great truth on our part, and by the light of it to study the lives of our fellow-men.

FLOWERS AND GRAVES.

A

SERMON

BY

O. B. FROTHINGHAM,

PREACHED IN

LYRIC HALL,

SIXTH AVENUE BETWEEN FORTY-FIRST AND FORTY-SECOND STREETS

May 25th, 1873.

NEW YORK:
D. G. FRANCIS, 17 ASTOR PLACE.
1873.

MR. FROTHINGHAM'S NEW BOOK.

THE RELIGION OF HUMANITY.

By O. B. FROTHINGHAM.

CONTENTS:

I. Tendencies.
II. God.
III. Bible.
IV. Christ.
V. Atonement.
VI. Power of Moral Inspiration.
VII. Providence.
VIII. Moral Ideal.
IX. Immortality.
X. The Education of Conscience.
XI. The Soul of God in Evil.
XII. The Soul of Truth in Error.

One Volume, 12mo, cloth, $1.50. Sent free, by mail, on receipt of price.

DAVID G. FRANCIS, Publisher,
17 Astor Place, New York.

"Mr. Frothingham is a thoroughly trained scholar, a keen thinker, a philanthropist of intelligence as well as enthusiasm, and a prose writer who ranks among the best of the time. We consider him the peer of James Martineau in insight, ability, independence and erudition. They are divided by many characteristic traits, but they both agree in devoting strong minds and earnest hearts to what they consider the best interests of humanity. God bless them both: they may be wrong in special opinions, but they are always right in the patience of their research and the beneficence of their objects.—*E. P. Whipple.*

Press of JAMES McGEE, 95 Bleecker St., N. Y.

FLOWERS AND GRAVES.

No one thing indicates more plainly the change that is passing over the mind of our people than the association of flowers with graves. People of middle age can recollect the time when all the associations with death were gloomy, if not ghastly. Thoughts were diligently turned to blackness, decay and coldness; the shroud, the narrow house, the dust, the worm, the funeral occasion was throughout melancholy; the room was darkened; the guests were heavily draped in mourning; the words of sermon and prayer were suggestive of fear; death was spoken of as an awful dispensation—a doom, a blight, a token of God's displeasure; an odor as if the charnel house filled the air. Now all that is changed. Rarely is there a funeral undecorated with flowers—costly flowers where the dead are rich, simple field flowers when they are poor. The coffin has become a casket of handsome wood, decorated with satin and silver, and upon it are laid orange blossoms and violets, as the case may be, loosely strewn or tied in bunches, or made into emblematic forms of cross or crown,

anchor or harp, making the sweetest things in nature convey the sweetest lessons of faith. At first flowers were laid on the graves of children and young girls; but now they are always brought for the middle-aged, the old men as well as women. No distinction is recognized of career or disposition, of fortune or fate. The tribute to death is impartial. The usage is not confined to the believers in any particular creed, to the professors of a liberal theology, or the disciples of a sentimental faith. It is universal. It defies the traditions of puritan piety. It graces the poor tenement of clay in which an anguished soul has lodged as pleasantly as the dust that has enshrined a hopeful spirit. The flowers creep even into churches on these sad occasions. They cover altars; they fill chancels, invading the holy of holies with their bloom and fragrance, and preaching their doctrine of sweetness where the gospel of a very different atonement is proclaimed.

A usage like this must be accounted for. There is a sentiment, and perhaps something deeper behind it. In many cases, no doubt, the flowers are scattered by thoughtless though kind hands, that merely wish to cover up repulsive things for a few moments. But a practice so universal could not have originated in so shallow a motive as that. Of all who observe it but a small number comparatively are so light minded or

so superficial in feeling as to forget, or imagine they could make others forget, by a thin layer of perishable leaves, anything awful like death, if death were really the awful thing it was reputed to be.

The custom referred to rather implies a change of sentiment towards nature, which can proceed only from a profounder change in our mental view. It is a tacit admission that death is an ordinance of nature, and as such, beautiful in its way and not hideous. That death is an ordinance of nature has indeed always been admitted, but that, as an ordinance of nature, it had any beauty has always been denied. For nature itself, by theologians and religious people, has been regarded as the reverse side of beauty, a dark and fatal power that held mankind in bondage. Nature has been a name for the dumb, unconscious, destructive elements of the world; its prince the evil one; its law a law of death; a thing to which life must be supernaturally imparted. The natural body was the deathly, the mortal body; the natural man was the unregenerated man; the natural heart, the wicked heart; the natural reason, the carnal reason; the natural life was the ungodly life. It has been the business of religion to make war on nature and the victory over death is reckoned a triumph over nature's most formidable champion. The resurrection from the dead was resurrection from the bondage

of sin as well. Death was the offspring of sin. While this view of nature prevailed no use was made of flowers except as emblems of perishableness. Their loveliness only added a touch of sadness to the world they adorned by reminding men that the fairest things were the most evanescent. They were emblems and teachers of death. "The grass withereth, the flower fadeth." "Like a flower of the field, so he flourisheth, for the wind passes over it and it is gone, and the place thereof shall know it no more."

But this view of nature has been succeeded by another. He is now regarded, not as a power of evil and corruption, but as a power of life and beneficence. Physiology teaches us to think of nature as exemplifying the processes of growth, that is as a living thing. Natural science presents her as a product of divine intelligence, a manifestation of perfect order, the grandest conceivable illustration of harmonious arrangement. The physician leaves his talismans and charms and studies the healing properties of nature. Literature owes its freshness to its faith in nature. Poetry sings the praise of nature. Philosophy tries to catch the method of nature. Science lives and moves and has its being in nature. Art, in the comparatively modern field of landscape painting, displays the wonderful beauty of natural objects, in their infinite combinations. A passion for

natural scenery, tempting men to imitate nature whenever they can, attests the thoroughness of our conversion from the ancient faith, to a new and wholly different one. Instead of ascribing to nature our disease, we all look to her for health. Instead of holding her accountable for the bitterness of death, we appeal to her to clothe it with sweetness.

Death itself shares the glory of this transformation. That it is an ordinance of nature no one disputes; but, with all things else, it partakes of the beneficent quality of nature's ordinances, and takes its place along with other dispensations of the all-good providence. Like ugly things innumerable, it loses its ugliness. Like bitter things innumerable, its bitterness is taken away. Death is felt to be a natural necessity to the individual, a beneficent law as regards the race, the release of the weary captive from confinement, the escape of such as cannot fulfill the purposes of existence, the condition of new life, power and joy, the provision for coming generations who want their turn at the well-spread feast of the universe. By all people death is felt to be a dispensation rather than a doom, and it is contemplated, even by believers in the old theology, with patience and equanimity in place of the ancient terror. The old artists painted monks and hermits gazing on skulls to remind themselves of the hollowness and transient-

ness of life, and communicate the melancholy contagion to their hearts. In a collection of pictures at Brussels there is a canvass representing a blooming girl standing face to face with a skull, and looking steadily into the caverns where once were eyes. There is no fear in her gaze, only curiosity ; her cheek preserves its color ; she is thinking of the end, of what is to come by and by ; but the end for her is not yet ; it is well in its place, but its place is not here ; she will not anticipate or borrow fears. The conception illustrates the nature of the change that has passed over the aspect of death. The significance of flowers under this new apprehension is at once obvious. It is fit that the loveliest things in nature should grace nature's most characteristic ordinance.

But we have not yet, I think, exhausted all the meaning of the usage we are considering. The association of graves with flowers argues a touching sentiment towards the dead themselves. Flowers convey a blessing on the departed. Their beauty is a veil to what was disagreeable ; their fragrance hides much that was unpleasant. They bury under their soft masses the vices and failures that disfigured their earthly existence. The familiar proverb "*mortuis nisi bonum*" receives a sweet interpretation from these delicious preachers, who, when people step forward to gaze on a corpse, present to them

the choicest of exquisite creations in form and color.

The sentiment of flowers is simply gracious. They express charity, not praise, or honor, but tenderness; a sweet sad pity. They are a tribute of compassion. Victors are crowned with laurels, heroes with olive leaves; the evergreen is the symbol of immortality. But the common flowers convey no such lofty lesson; and therefore they are better for common graves, where ordinary humanity rests from its labor.

The ceremony of decorating with flowers the graves of dead soldiers is becoming on this account. They were not all heroes; they did not all fight for a worthy prize or with a worthy ambition; they did not all die as martyrs to liberty, or as devoted patriots. Many went to the war as mercenaries, caring more for the spoil than the cause; and many gained no renown for themselves, and reflected no honor on their country. Some were adventurers and some were desperadoes, and some were poltroons; but all died in the cause, if not for it: nay all died for it, though not perhaps intentionally; all contributed their lives to the general result; the best would not have won without the aid of the worst; the heroes would not have conquered without assistance from the mercenaries. All fought, all suffered, all died; some from wounds, some from sickness.

Some on the battle field, some in the hospitals. They stood shoulder to shoulder ; they stepped at the word of command to the front ; they shared the fatigues of the march, the discomforts of the camp, the perils of the watch. They were comrades in the campaign if they were not companions in heart. So let the flowers be strewn on all the graves alike, in memory of their death and of that which their death secured.

Yes, let the flowers be strewn on all the graves without distinction of party or of allegiance. Why this unwillingness that the solemn commemoration day should be ruled by any save such as were loyal to the Union cause ? Why this anger at the thought of participation in the sacred observance on the part of those whose dead laid their lives down for the cause against which we fought ? Ours are not the only dead. Our hearts are not the only ones stricken. The enemies' dead left homes they loved and persons with whom their lives were bound up. Their graves represent sorrow. Nature deals with them as tenderly as she deals with ours. The grass grows green upon them ; the summer rain falls. The summer sun shines ; the summer breezes blow ; the spring violets take root in them as willingly ; the silent processes of transformation deal with the dust they cover, as swiftly and thoroughly. Let the loving bless the

loved, though their loved and ours be not the same. Yes, though when alive they hated one another, they do not hate now, and another earth hates neither. The fellowship of the dead should create fellowship among the living. Would that all over the country, in every place of burial, all, of every state and section might meet and perform the same duty for those they mourn.

I will go further than that, and say, would that there might be no distinction whatever in the graves! That all might be decorated, and by the same hands! or rather that no hands might refuse to decorate any; that in this beautiful celebration, foes might be friends, and people of either section or of either side might scatter nature's blessings on whatever mound was nearest. Such a wish does not spring from feeling, even the most generous; it springs from thought. There are many reasons in justification of it. The observance is a tender memorial of sympathy and respect. May I add, of gratitude. But if it is appropriate at all, why is it not appropriate to the whole?

In the first place, the sorrow remembered is a universal sorrow, due to a common cause. It was occasioned by a civil war which involved all sections, and inflicted woe on the whole land. These dead fell by one anothers hands. The slain were slayers; the buried dug graves for others. All were victims of

a common fate. Sorrow should make men brothers. Especially should the severer sorrows of the defeated propitiate the victors. We caused infinitely more wretchedness than we suffered. Our foes have little beside their graves. Their homes are desolate ; their cities in ruins ; their villages depopulated ; their fortunes destroyed ; their powers and privileges taken away, their communities scattered. Their slaves are their rulers. Their old people are condemned to pass the remnant of their days in poverty and loneliness. their young people are reduced to unfamiliar and distasteful employments to obtain the bare means of subsistence. Their gardens are wasted ; their industry is prostrate ; their lands are idle ; their present is cheerless ; their future is hopelessly dark. It surely is not much to toss them a flower, and thus confess a fellowship of emotion with them. If they dug our graves we dug theirs, and theirs are deeper than ours, for all they had is buried in them!

In the next place, if our tribute is paid to heroism how can we confine it to those whose heroism was displayed only on one side of our great national controversy ? Our adversaries were Americans, and if valor be a thing to boast of, Americans should acknowledge it. Its glory reflects on the race. Courage should be a ground of sympathy no less than sorrow. Their valor surely was not inferior to ours.

They fought well—how well the graves we honor testify. Their devotion was singular; their sacrifices were immense; their perseverance was indomitable; their constancy was unfaltering. They behaved like men of conviction, offering up all they had to offer up with an unsparing generosity. If we criticize their methods, it should not be forgotten that they criticized ours. If we justified ourselves, they justified themselves. The odds were heavily against them, of numbers, material, resources, general sympathy and approval, moral force. The spirit of the age was against them. But with a heroism worthy of the best cause, the very fates their adversaries, they struggled on, till the end found them completely exhausted. It was a wonderful fight they made—wonderful for single-minded consecration, and for silent endurance. They were terrible foemen. They were countrymen; would we have had them cowards?

But their heroism was displayed, it is urged in an infamous cause. It was animated not by a fine enthusiasm, but by a furious fanaticism. Their courage was the courage of desperation. They were not inspired by a great principle, but infested by a devilish force. We cannot strew violets on their graves without bestowing sweet thoughts on their memories, and that is impossible. Their memories are unfragrant. They fought for slavery and they fought in

the spirit of despots ; blessings turn into curses while dropping from our lips on their dust. We are not hard-hearted to their sorrow ; we are not insensible to their valor ; but we have nothing but abhorrence for their guilt. Because they rose in arms against the government, because they struck at the nation's life, because they fought for an abominable system. We must hold them in detestation now as much as ever, their memory now as once their persons. Loyalty, fidelity, the love of liberty, patriotism, these are the qualities we respect ; these qualities we would, by precept and example, teach our children to honor, and one way of teaching them, we refuse to drop so much as a violet on their graves.

This is a feeling it is hard to reason against. It is a feeling, a strong one, and in some sense a just one. But there are considerations which should soften it, as a feeling, and perhaps remove it. And of these considerations the chief is that, admitting the guilt, it was not all on their side. They, and many along with them, would now, were they alive, earnestly repel the charge of guilt. They would contend that the institution, the political system, the social constitution they fought for was one that had the approval of ages, that was countenanced still by vast numbers of intelligent people, and that their allegiance to it was honest. Let this pass ; set the moral dis-

crimination, the moral casuistry, if you will, aside. The fact remains that the guilt we shudder at was not confined to them, but was shared by people of all sections of the country. So far as it was guilt, it was national guilt.

It is timely yet to bear in mind that the earliest and the strongest words in reprobation of that guilt were spoken by men who were themselves in immediate contact with it, men whose descendants gave up their lives in support of it, the most eminent men in our history. Washington and Jefferson characterized it plainly and washed their hands of it. It is not yet too late to say that the most ardent and influential champion of slavery at the South, Mr. Calhoun, was a man of singularly unselfish heart, who regarded the cause he contended for as a holy cause, and contended for it with a moral sincerity of purpose worthy of all commendation. And, on the other hand, can we forget, ought we ever to forget, ought we to do any thing but diligently remember that the men who deprecated agitation and resented interference, and used their utmost influence to damp down the rising flames of liberty, and lent all possible encouragement and aid to the friends of the institution which at last brought on the civil war, the men who demanded peace in the interest of material prosperity were Northern men?

Have we forgotten already the persecution of the abolitionists in the Northern states and cities, even in Massachusetts and Boston, or the opposition to the party of liberty, that was organized and conducted by people of property, and standing and culture, and political influence even in New England? Had the sentiment of liberty been honored here it would have triumphed everywhere. But being dishonored here, the war and the graves were inevitable. Hence the guilt was mutual. In a certain sense it was more ours than theirs; for with us it was more deliberate and purposed. They sinned from nature and education, we from policy.

On such an occasion as this of our floral commemoration, I prefer to think little of the guilt on either side. The forces that were at work were mightier than individuals, or parties, or States, or sections. They were the vast elemental forces that we call the "spirit of the age," of which parties and even nations are the instruments, which none can control, which all must further, whether they will it or not. Looking back over the past generation, we see now what we could not see before, the working of destiny, the pressure of an irresistible fate, decreeing the crisis through which we passed. The masses of human will were swept along as leaves before a blast; the movements were providential. An old Hebrew

would have said, "God hardened Pharaoh's heart;" "He sent upon the people strong delusions, and caused them to believe a lie;" a judicial blindness seemed to take possession of powerful minds; people fell under the influence of strange passions; there was a fierce whirling as of moral tornadoes, the course whereof none could predict, all under the direction of some awful power whose purposes were hidden.

The war was a war of elements, a volcano, a cataclysm. All who fell in it on either side were victims sacrificed in obedience to that tremendous principle of expiation of which, ever and anon, in history, we receive an awful evidence. The blood shed was atoning blood; the slain were martyrs; the graves cover so many witnesses to the truth that justice will be satisfied though the Son of Man himself die to secure it. The full significance of this floral commemoration is not apprehended, so long as this idea of expiation is excluded from it, so long as the flowers are scattered over the graves of loved friends, and not also over the graves of victims on the altar of a divine retribution. They are God's buried, not ours; the flowers are laid on his shrine, not on our dust; they are emblems of allegiance as much as tributes of affection; they represent conviction no less than tenderness, and contrition no less than gra-

titude, and humility even more than triumph. They who visit the graves of martyrs are smitten with a sense of the guilt they testified against, and the glory they purchased. They are at peace ; their battle is ended ; neither hatred nor wounds can touch them further. The living now are the witnesses.

That this ceremonial should degenerate into an idle holiday formality is something to be earnestly deprecated. That it will do so is, I fear, inevitable ; for thus all great occasions do. But this has elements in it that should prevent its degenerating into idle parade. No holiday we have is so deeply, so essentially religious as it is ; none touches so solemnly the awful laws of the spirit which are the bases of our very existence. None holds us to so close and tender a communion with heroism. It invites people to the country ; it makes them acquainted with the solemn abodes of death ; it joins them in a fellowship of tender memories and divine hopes. The event it celebrates is the greatest event in our national existence, and the mode of the celebration is averse to all ceremonial pomp or noisy display. The eternal equity dug these multitudinous graves ; a promise of fresh allegiance to the eternal equity is the flower we should drop upon them.

There are two kinds of democracy, both bearing the same name, and both to undiscerning eyes appearing

to be the same thing ; but they are so unlike as to be almost hostile. The first is founded on the principle of human brotherhood. Its watch word is " Be ye members one of another." Its law is the law of equity. I will not say love, for love is a feeling, and works only in the domain of feeling; of course it does not apply, except in a peculiar sense, to wide social relations. Equity is a principle, having no reference to persons, knowing no distinction of persons, while love knows no other distinction. Equity is love raised to the intellectual and moral sphere. Equity, therefore, is the soul of the democracy I speak of. Its aim is not to put everybody on an equality, but to give to everybody what belongs to him, to secure to every one his dues. Its spirit is frank, friendly, humane. It wishes well to all, to people of all races, faiths, conditions, to men and to women alike. It demands impartial legislation, unprejudiced government, honest usage, fair opportunity. It hates monopolies, disapproves of class privileges, discourages formal exclusiveness, abolishes artificial distinctions between orders and ranks. To equalize burdens, to distribute opportunities is its work. Its words are words of welcome ; its hands are hands of help. Its motto is " You are as good as I am. God bless you."

The other kind of democracy is based on selfishness,

pure and simple; not on a noble self-love, which takes high concerns into account, but on an ignoble self-love which takes only the lowest and most incidental interests into account. All the time it has the animal self in view. It thinks only of getting. Its idea of liberty is liberty to get all one can. It demands this liberty for every body, and having secured it, is satisfied. Every man for himself is its rule. Let the swiftest and the strongest win. Its politics are a scramble for office; its social usages are a scramble for position, power and pleasure; its business is a scramble for money. It dooms the slow to beggary, and drives the weak to the wall. It outwits the simple, treads down the modest, dupes the conscientious, elbows aside the refined. It discountenances monopoly in general, but urges the individual to monopolize as much as he can. Whoever wants anything must fight for it, be the odds ever so great. They who have mean to keep. This democracy fosters exclusiveness; it is neither generous, friendly, nor kind. It is willing that the disfranchised should remain so; it views with indifference the disabilities of women, wishing to keep the field of competition in the hands of those who already hold it. The motto of this democracy is "I am as good as you are," and it accompanies the statement not with a blessing, but with something like a curse.

That this is the type of the prevailing democracy of to-day, who will question? Who does not see evidence of it in the frightful greed that possesses all our people to an extent that attracts the attention of foreign people, and makes us a by-word of reproach? Whence the corruption and venality, the plotting, the fraud, the abuse of trusts, the unblushing treachery, the brazen-faced robbery, the cruel use of power that seems to be a prominent feature of our American life, and is dishonoring our name abroad, if not from this low democratic idea which discards all distinctions of quality among men, all traditions of character, all standards of honor, all rules of moral order, and makes the power to grasp and to hold the test of worth. The burden of complaint in our civilization lies against this practiced idea. Against it lies the burden of accusation. Against it is thundered the prophecy of failure. It is this idea of democracy that makes it justifiable in a recent English writer to say: "It is a question whether the enormous development of equality in America, the rapid production of an immense multitude of common-place, self-satisfied, and essentially slight people is an exploit which the whole world need fall down and worship." A bitterer word than that might be safely used to describe a democracy which talks about the equal rights of all and means the withholding of dearest rights from

those who cannot seize them with the strong hand.

The graves we are to decorate with flowers this week attest the divine judgment on a democracy like this. These victims died simply because democracy refused to be humane, refused to heed the law of membership, turned a deaf ear to the principle of justice, and struggling for sectional supremacy nearly fell into anarchy. If those dead men could speak, they would say: Let not our lives be thus wasted! Let not the lesson of our martyrdom be unlearned! It was in consequence of a long violation of justice that we were doomed to death; let our blood suffice for that guilt. Let us feel that if the Republic fails now, it will not be for the reason that its principles have been neglected, but for the reason that those principles are against the government of the world.

God be thanked, the idea of a true Republic is not lost. Nay, it is entertained by noble spirits, and by more and more of them. If they are true to themselves, a worthy democracy may yet be attained. These will meet the shades of the dead with clear countenance, and will respond, "Yes, you pale ones, we hear your admonition, we listen to your prayer. It shall be our duty, so far as in us lies, to see that the Republic in its principles is preserved. We will keep the victory you have won; we will prize the treasure

you have bequeathed. Sweet and honorable it is to die for ones country. Be ours the sweetness and honorableness of living to the country for which the brave have died."

RELIGION,

THE

POETRY OF LIFE.

A

SERMON

BY

O. B. FROTHINGHAM,

PREACHED IN

LYRIC HALL,

SIXTH AVENUE BETWEEN FORTY-FIRST AND FORTY-SECOND STREETS,

June 1st, 1873.

NEW YORK:
D. G. FRANCIS, 17 ASTOR PLACE.
1873.

RELIGION,

THE POETRY OF LIFE.

This is Whitsuntide; the festival that celebrates the bursting of trees into blossom, the clothing of young believers in white garments, the breaking of the human soul into new birth. I shall speak of religion as the element that idealizes and makes poetical human life.

The writer of the letter to the Hebrews speaks of priests who, under the law, brought gifts which were only a symbol and a shadow of spiritual things; and, in the same strain, the writer of the letter to the Colossians warns those whom he addresses against giving undue care to holidays, new moons, and Sabbaths, which are a shadow of things to come; indeed, and all through the epistolary part of the New Testament we see running this idea, that the old dispensation recorded in the Hebrew scriptures is a figure, an emblem, a symbol or poetic fore-feeling of something glorious in the future. What is called the allegorical method of interpretation changed the ancient text into figures of speech; made the literal sense, therefore, a suggestion of deeper senses that lay concealed

beneath the writing. An allegory is neither more nor less than a poem ; the allegorical method of interpretation which began to prevail in the first age of the Church, which had a distinguished example in Paul, and still obtains in some quarters, was simply a poetical interpretation ; it changed religious documents and forms into works of art. This interpretation has found its warmest modern champion in the Seer, Emanuel Swedenborg. To the thought of Swedenborg, everything that lay on the surface of the Old and New Testament writings, and especially of the portions that seem to us most grotesque fanciful or incredible, the old chronicles and wild prophecies, was an imaginative expression of a hidden spiritual sense. The literal scripture addresses the senses or the sensuous mind, the common historical understanding ; its purport is concealed ; its significance is suggested ; it conveys truth, but does not tell it in plain speech. Doctor Wilkinson, of London, one of the most enthusiastic and brilliant expositors of Swedenborg, says, in the preface to his biography of him, that children ought to be everlastingly grateful to the Swedish seer for presenting the Old Testament to them as a book of fairy tales ; for that, he says, is precisely what the literal Bible is; a book for children. If you wish to get at the soul of it, the book for men, that is another thing. Only spiritual people can apprehend that.

Spiritual things must be spiritually discerned; the letter of it which we peruse with the outward eye is symbolical, of little moment. Scriptures that have no spiritual sense have no sense worth making out.

The Bible presents a succession of pictures. Eden, with its gardens and groves, its arbors and flowers, its tame animals, and spontaneously growing fruits; the blissful spot where the first man and the first woman wandered in innocence, like simple-hearted children, and conversed with God in the cool of the day, is a tale of infancy. The story of the angels who greeted Abraham as he sat at the door of his tent at evening, were taken in by him and entertained with the best he had, whom he dismissed in the morning, and followed by his eye as they went towards the doomed city of the plain bearing the message of destruction, is a poem to be interpreted by the imagination, not by the understanding. It is a history of the soul addressed to fancy and feeling, not to sober common sense.

The legend goes on to picture the angelic visitation, the rejection of the messengers, the burning of Sodom and the saving of Lot, in the same style of bold rhetoric; the artist, fancy, hopes to present before the minds of uncultured men some faint image of the doom that always follows wickedness, of the reward that always waits on righteousness. The interview of

Moses with God in the burning bush, the high communion on the mount, the wonder working in Egypt, the Passover, the Exodus, the passage of the Red Sea, the parting of the waters, the drying up of the bottom of the deep, the chant that Miriam raises to the Lord when the passage is done, is all to be read, not as a prosaic chronicle of actual events, to be taken in its obvious meaning, but as a poetic foreshadowing of the passage of the soul from bondage to freedom, faith drying up the sea that must be passed through—the red sea of anguish. The miraculous food in the desert, the herb that sweetens the bitter fountain, the manna that falls from heaven, the water that gushes from the sand, the rivulet that flows from the smitten rock, the pillar of cloud by day and of fire by night, are all, again, symbols, presented to the imagination, not annals recorded for information. Joshua commanding the sun to stand still, Elijah fed in his cave by ravens, the prophet standing out at the door of his cavern shuddering at the movement of the earthquake, trembling before the blast of the wind, hiding his face before the tempest, and listening to the still, small voice, is, again, a bit of painting, skilfully colored and shaded, for the soul's vision.

We come to the New Testament, and there the same grand series of pictures is continued; the same fine artists, faith, hope, love, are still at work;

the spiritual laws furnish the themes, the East supplies the imagery. The lovely stories clustering about the birth of Jesus,—the manger cradle in the cavern—the animals grouped around the little child—the shepherds looking in at the door—the superb kings from the east, kings and priests in one, wearing their white turbans, dismounting from their camels, and meekly following to the feet of the new-born infant, their slaves bearing the weight of gold, frankincense, and myrrh;—the angels stilling the air with their broad pinions, and making the world happy with their songs;—the mute plain, the star pausing in its career over the holy spot, are all, again, so many exquisite idyls, touched with the daintiest feeling for art. The heart of man, from its resources of reverence, hope, and affectionateness, from its love of childhood, from its respect of manly grandeur and truth, took the rainbow hues and the inspiration that combined them, and set up the picture for all the world's beholding. Another sketch we have, representing Jesus as stepping down into the Jordan to be baptized; we see the heavens opening to him, and the dove coming down and alighting on his head; we hear an audible voice speaking and calling him the Son of Man. Again, he is in the desert, alone with the rocks and the blistering sun, hungry and thirsty, fed by manna from heaven, comforted by the angels who bring to him the

consolation of heaven. Again, the same form is on the Mount of Transfiguration,—that mountain which no geographer has ever found or ever will find, for it is a poetic mount—the mountain of the dawn which nobody ever discovered;—Jesus is watching, his three intimate friends slumber through the cool night; the cloud that overshadows him is bright, and a voice comes out of the silver lining, saying, "This is my beloved son, in whom I am well pleased." Once more, he kneels in the garden, and angels come to comfort him. The resurrection is another picture; the scene of agony is over; the storm of passion is spent; the dust is laid; the blood has ceased flowing; tranquility and calmness settle down on the garden, with the night; then we have the upheaving of the earth, the opening of the graves, the walking about in the dusk of the shadowy spirits of the departed, the angels in white sitting at the head and foot of the sepulchre; amid earthquake, and fear, and lightning, the great form of glory rises from the grave and appears to its own friends. How poetical is every part of the story! how symbolical every touch! What a collection of emblems it is! It was constructed in that spirit. It is not history or narrative, chronicle or record. It is poetry, addressed to the imagination. It is written for faith and hope and love to ponder on and enjoy.

The last book of the New Testament, the book of the Apocalypse, is, by all confession, a poem, the view of a seer, not the affidavit of a witness; full of figures, signs, and enigmatical expressions which the critic can make nothing of, but which the soul transfigures into spiritual truths. The Heavenly Jerusalem crowns the piece; the holy city comes down from God adorned as a bride; the walls of jasper, the gates of pearl, the streets of translucent gold, the corner stones of gems, flash in the eternal glory; the city needs no sun to lighten it; the doors are never shut; the kings of the earth stream in; the river of the water of life flows through the broad avenues, and on either side stand trees that bear perpetual fruit, which were never planted. It is a faint shadowing forth of the splendor that is to gladden the new believing Earth. Thus, throughout the Bible, Old Testament and New, from the story of the first creation of the world by the fiat of Deity, to that of the world's last judgment by the Christ, we have a series of gorgeous pictures, large enough for all the worlds to see, delineated by the master imagination, of the race.

May we not go further and say that religion itself is poetical? Is not the spirit of religion the spirit of art? Faith, ope, love, reverence, aspiration, trust, meekness,—these are the painters; and what we call the doctrines and sacraments of religion are what they

have succeeded in putting on canvass. To the mind of the philosopher they are unsatisfactory, of course, because no artist can do ample justice to spiritual truths. The religious doctrines that are held—not by the Christian world only, but by the whole religious world, how entirely they are composed of symbols! Take for example, the doctrine of a personal God. It is a symbol. God is infinite, eternal, of course, invisible, inconceivable, unimaginable. There is no power in the human mind to outline the infinite; there is no power in the human heart to guess who or what, or where he can be; nevertheless we must try to get an image; so we send out our artist, who is called imagination, and bid him frame for us a conception of the Divine Being; it reports him as a mighty person, clothed with the attributes and faculties essential to humanity; it describes him as dwelling outside of the world, sitting on the cloudy circumference of the planetary system, his omniscient eyes gazing, as our's might, over the expanse of creation, his myriad hands touching the springs that make creation move, his quick ear placed at the focus of the world's whispering gallery, that the lightest breath which proceeds from human lips may make a distinct impression on him. Something like this is the average idea of God. But this is poetry, not prose. Our imagery is faulty at the best. The child pictures

God in the tree-tops; thinks that his eye is in the star. The philosopher diffuses the divine mind through creation, and makes it thrill and throb in every atom of the universe. The philosopher, too, is a child; though every infant should become a pure philosopher, he would still be as a little child in the presence of the Infinite; and though his picture might be superbly outlined, and grandly filled in, and exquisitely colored, it would be a child's picture still.

The same artist that paints for us the image of the personal God, paints for us the image of a thoughtful Providence; that is, a God who thinks of us, watches us, has his eye upon us, his ear open to our private cry; who comes to us in our moment of exigency, gives us bread when we are hungry, opens the spring of water for us when we are athirst, clothes us when we are naked; it is the image of a person, who is found by every man in the hour of need—an image which we cannot wholly get rid of; thought may expand and refine till its lines attain an exceeding delicacy, still no intelligence will quite obliterate the touches of the artist's pencil. Cultivated people keep it by them, carry it about their persons, and set it up in churches for the multitude to gaze at. Beautiful as works of art, these representations are still works of art.

We have our doctrine of prayer; a doctrine which

teaches that if we ask God earnestly for gifts, He will give them. This too is a representation, a device of art. The popular belief in prayer is poetic. It is a symbol, the best we can frame, to express the relation of aspiration to inspiration, the sweet truth respecting want and supply in the world of feeling. The literal truth is hard to convey, the figurative truth is appreciable to the simplest heart.

Contemplate the doctrine of hell that Christendom has painted; see its demons, its flames, its burning sands, its everlasting æons of pain, its lurid gulfs, the smoke that never is dispelled by the breath of heaven, the worm that never dies! Such a picture Christendom painted as the only one that would do justice to its feeling of the hatefulness of evil; but it is a picture still, and has come to be considered a very coarse one. They who sketched it roughly, at first, did not intend to draw a surveyor's chart, probably never dreamed that their rude work would be taken as a finished representation of scientific fact.

The dogma is the poem reduced to prose; an artist's study used as an engineer's plan; a psalmist's outburst of feeling read before a social science board. It is like measuring Noah's mythical ark with a yard stick.

Is it otherwise with our view of heaven? Is that anything but a dream? John of Patmos sees it as a

beautiful city, with golden streets and gates of pearl. A tamer imagination paints it as a lovely scene, with landscape, and ocean, river, arbor and garden, where children play in the shade. The social feeling depicts it as a home. The philosophic mind thinks of it as a laboratory of science, an observatory of knowledge. The reformer paints it for himself as a domain where all wrong shall be righted, where there shall be eternal peace instead of war, freedom instead of slavery, joy for heaviness and beauty for ashes. But conceive of the future as we will, we conceive of it as poets and artists prompt; our best dream, our loveliest hope, our freshest imagination, is but the faint outline sketch, which nothing but experience of the spiritual laws can ever adequately fill up.

Thus we might go on, from point to point, and prove that each form, rite, doctrine is simply a poem addressed to the imagination, and intended, through the imagination, to reach the heart and conscience of men.

Do you urge that this is reducing religion to nothing, that to say religion is poetic, is to say that religion is a fiction, a dream? I reply because it is poetic, it is the real thing that we know it to be. If it were dull matter of fact, if the chemist could subject it to the action of his blow-pipe and resolve it into gas, it would be nothing. If the geologist could put

it under his hammer and break it into a million infinitesimal pieces, it would be intangible—nothing. But because it is poetic, and being poetic can change its shape and color and become adapted to the various moods of human emotion, it lives, and is everlastingly beautiful. The universe is a universe of use; but also it is a universe of beauty; and although we cannot easily define beauty, fail of telling what it is that constitutes its elements, yet, if we could take beauty out of the world, there would be little of use left. Could we take the glory out of this summer day, what would the twelve hours of it bring? where would be its bright opportunities, its happy uses, its sparkling joys? It is the beauty of the world that makes the world good for human creatures to live in; for it is the beauty of the world that awakens the mind, kindles the heart, glorifies the imagination, gladdens and inspires the soul; while the uses of the world occupy the hand and support the body. It is the outline of the hills, the radiance of the sunbeam, the flashing of the star, the exquisite green of the grass, the delicious bloom and indescribable fragrance of the flowers, the glitter of the wave, the magnificent sweep of the billow, that makes the world for us what it is on a summer's day; and if we could blot out that visible charm, if we could shut the eye that sees it, or thicken the ear that hears it, the world would be no home in which we

could bear to live. God is the great artist; the eternal mind is eternal feeling, as well; the everlasting thought is everlasting imagination. God is the original poet who expresses himself in symbol all the time—who never states a literal fact, but always suggests, hints, teases the mind, provokes it to deeper and deeper study of his symbols; and it is because the Almighty is thus an artist, that the world is the world we love.

Fancy children giving up their fairy books, and betaking themselves seriously from their earliest years to the study of history, geology, chemistry, what would childhood be? There would be no such thing. A child not fond of fairy stories lives in no child region. The fairy story brings the fairy land, and the fairy land is the land of dream and expectation and hope; it is the real world in which the child lives before experience comes to it. The cultured imagination fills up all the space that is not covered by knowledge with wild conjecture. Larger children must have their fairy stories, their symbols, their dreams; they must have their land of enchantment. As soon as we pass the limit of positive knowledge—and it is passed very soon indeed, fancy takes up the work of interpretation, imagination opens its stores, feeling and hope send out their sketchers; they collect material, and cover the walls of the world with those emblems or pictures which we call objects of faith.

I contend that religion does its best as poetry; it fulfils its true mission when it speaks to our imagination, makes us dream, encourages us to aspire, lends wings to our fancy, and opens all the boundless depths of the empyrean to oblivion of our cares. This is the artist that glorifies life. Let us see how he does it.

The great desire of Thomas Carlyle, the living prophet of the last generation, was to glorify work. He was never tired of dilating upon the dignity of work. Work, he declares, is saving sacrament. The worker, the doer,—he is the God-inspired man. All work, he says, is venerable,—work of the poet, philosopher, man of letters, man of science, artizan,—aye, of the laborer, as much as any. He loved, for its sake, the horny palm, the hard visage, the bent body, the coarse limbs; he respected the man, who, stooping down to the earth, with rugged toil ploughed its surface and raised the reluctant fruits.

What the modern prophet meant was simply this: That the everlasting God worked forever at re-creating the world: the first creation was not enough: creation is every day. So the work of re-creation must be incessantly done, not only among the constellations that gem the night heavens, but equally in the dust and sweat of daily life; and every person, who conspires to do something to carry on the work of regenerating the material earth, becomes thereby

a co-worker with the Eternal; thence, all work is venerable,—ay, sublime, poetic; and it is this poetic aspect of work—imparting a poetic aspect to life, that makes existence tolerable for sensitive hearts.

To illustrate: the preacher week after week produces his sermon, comes before his audience, larger or smaller, and delivers it; goes home, prepares another; does this steadily, year after year, for a lifetime. During the week the poor come to him for aid, the helpless, the wretched; he spends his time giving advice, lending assistance, offering consolation. When he thinks of this aspect of his calling, his life seems tiresome, monotonous, empty, to a degree that discourages him and makes all his effort seem unprofitable. It is only when he can lift his heart above it, can think of himself as one of a line of prophets whose office it is to bring light life and immortality into a world of much darkness; it is only when he can feel that he is a humble sharer in the ministry of the Father who is serving all the time the least of his creatures, that the manna comes to him in the desert, and the sweet herb makes palatable the bitter water of his daily cup. See the lawyer bending over his papers—interminable cases—endless cross-questioning of stupid witnesses—tedious sifting of evidence, desperate attempts to winnow a little grain of truth out of an immense mass of falsehood and ignorance

as soon as one case is dismissed, another one is brought on ; years of life pass in this apparently hopeless effort to extract a small residuum of equity from the vast mass of wickedness in a naughty world. It is only when he can lift his eye now and then to the form of the Eternal Justice which must be embodied, wrought into the smallest details of human affairs, and made to tell upon the subjects of human controversy ; it is only as he can think of the Just One who is righting all the wrongs of the universe, and of himself as a modest helper in that immortal work, that his heart becomes reassured. The Eternal Justice has been at work turning over hopeless cases for thousands of years, and this is as far as it has brought them out of their chaos ; and shall an earnest man despond because in part of a brief lifetime of legal work, he can perhaps make good only a few points that shall stand sharply out above the wild waste of waters ?

Look at the physician ; what a weary professional life is his ! day and night going in and out among the sick, sitting by beds of agony, listening to tales of misery, feeling the dying pulse, hearing the complaints of people who imagine their ailment much greater than it really is, and cheering people whose disease is graver than they suspect ; what does it all amount to —his skill, his art ?—so many die, so few are healed ; all these thousands of years of medical experiment

resulting at last in conjecture; his science in its infancy; his method still tainted with empiricism; his best endeavors often defeating themselves and bringing humiliation on him. He could not live if he did not remember the Great Physician of souls and bodies, who has made the material world itself, to be one wealthy repository of healing herbs; who appoints him and his brotherhood agents to administer the remedies which he created, and makes experiment the condition of knowledge. The moment the physician catches a glimpse of his true relation to the sanitary laws and their administration, his profession becomes one of the grandest in the world. See the merchant, poring over his ledgers, balancing books, planning new enterprises, immersed in figures; what a wearisome business! No time for thought, for study, for art, beauty, recreation; his whole brain occupied daily to exhaustion with complicated projects for extending commerce, increasing wealth, developing industry, ultimately bringing together, perhaps, distant points of the world, and inducing remote nations to exchange products. But he *does* this. The products *are* exchanged; the continents *are* made friendly; oceans become highways; gulfs are bridged. He is a high-priest; a prophet of brotherhood; a reconciler. Distant and even opposite races of men through his agency come to know and understand each other, to

enter into treaty and pledge brotherhood; hostile religions, at his persuasion, lay aside their enmities. The food in one quarter of the globe feeds the hungry in another, because he is there to promote the process of distribution. Of all men in this work-a-day world, who do hard work, there is none who is able to labor, it seems to me, under a more poetic inspiration, than the merchant. The smallest trader enters, according to degree, into the same majestic and ideal calling. He is a distributor; he transfers. The merchant uses the ship; the trader uses the basket and the bundle,—that is all the difference between them; the law is the same. Both help to create and to recreate; both aid in building up society after the human pattern.

Life in its literal aspects is wearisome enough; all life looked at from day to day as it goes along, is tiresome; translate any career into prose, and it is stupid reading. Take the grandest of human callings and detail its routine; people will turn away from it as from a dull story. And yet one may take the smallest calling, the meanest occupation, the most matter of course duty, and shed on it this beautiful light of the ideal world, the glory of religion, and behold, as every dewdrop becomes a diamond when the morning comes over the hills, as every bit of mica flashes like a pearl when the sunbeam strikes it, so this little atom of

duty, care, toil, trouble, becomes a gem when touched by the light of its principle.

The house-keeper toils at her labor, always beginning, never ending, never seeming to diminish or to improve. It is a wearisome thing this battle with the moth and the spider, with soil and dust,—a thing that women groan over and complain of, not without reason; and yet, the moment you introduce the thought of home, with its associations, wife, children, friends, daily intercourse, pleasant communion, rest under the same roof, literature and play, art on the walls, and beauty everywhere, the work becomes transfigured. George Herbert, in his fine poem called *The Elixir*, beginning,

> Teach me, my God and King
> In all things Thee to see,
> And what I do in anything,
> To do it as for Thee,

says:—

> A servant with this clause
> Makes drudgery divine:
> Who sweeps a room as for Thy laws,
> Makes that and the action fine.

Sweeping a room is not poetical. Brooms are not ideal things. Bridget going about in a cloud of dust brushing cobwebs from the ceiling, is not an object that in our hours of revery we delight to contemplate.

And yet, there is poetic cleaning and unpoetic cleaning; religious and irreligious dusting. If Bridget has no touch of poetry in her, no sense of ideal beauty, no conception of a principle presiding over her menial occupation, she will not do the work properly; she will sweep the dirt into the corners and leave it there; she will cast no glance under the tables or behind the sofas; she will not take the trouble to lift the rugs and shake them out of the window in the air. But let her feel that there is a principle in her work, that her work is as susceptible of being perfectly done as the painter's work is, or the poet's, or the writer's, she will no longer be slatternly or careless; the dust will be swept out; the rugs will be shaken and aired; her brush will go behind the screens and beneath the mats; thus will it appear that she has been converted to religion—has felt the touch of an ideal world. One of the labors of Hercules, the Sun-god, was to clean the stables of Augeas, King of Elis, in a single day. Augeas was a great keeper of cattle, and his stables were overwhelmed with litter. Hercules is always cleaning the Augean stables. The sun-god is always disinfecting the world, keeping down the vermin, removing the ugly shapes, purifying the air. In these vast labors Bridget with broom and duster partakes.

Thus religion makes life poetic by introducing ideal elements. It will glorify anything. A friend of

mine, a man of culture, capacity, knowledge, felt himself called to teach idiots. He had half a dozen of these most wretched of human creatures under his roof, objects of his daily care. They were unpleasant inmates, with little or no idea of cleanliness, or decency; their heads were misshapen, their bodies uncouth, their limbs distorted; they had lack lustre eyes, heavy mouths, flabby cheeks, and that expression of utter vacancy in their countenances that takes the heart out of a human creature; but this friend of mine watched them early and late, ministered to them in menial ways, even lay down on the floor with them to teach them the common motions of their bodies and hands. "How can you do it?" I asked, "how can you bear it, you, with your capacity, your power, your taste?" He replied, "I could neither do it nor bear it, if I did not see in each one of these poor creatures a child of heaven. It would be impossible to endure my life if I did not feel that I was commissioned, sent here to awaken into a divine flame, a spark that is now all but extinguished in these dim breasts. I believe there is a link not broken between these poor embryos of humanity and the Eternal Mind; and it is my duty, nay, my privilege, my joy, to make that link stronger, so that the embryos shall never drop out of the reach of the Infinite hand."

The pianist, Rubenstein, being asked how he liked the great Brooklyn preacher, expressed himself as disappointed. "May I ask why?" said his friend. "Because he brings religion down to the people, instead of bringing the people up to religion. The moment," he said, "religion ceases to bid men do the impossible, it forfeits its claim and deserts its post." Religion must be poetic, it must keep the thought of men above the ordinary level of their dust; its office is to bathe the soul in the light of the divine radiance and the sweetness of the divine love.

We complain of materialism;—the tendencies, it is said, are to materialism; to materialistic opinions and to material pursuits,—to money making, and money-saving; to the building of stately houses, and the improvement of the outward estate. But the tendency to materialism appears to me, not in these things, but rather in the loss of our ideals, the going out of our poetic light, the fading of our dreams. Bring these back again; let the dreams be vivid once more; let the light be steady and radiant, the materialism we deplore will disappear. We may work at what we will —work all the time, work at the hardest toils, love the work—devote ourselves to a life of work, and while laboring with our hands may keep our hearts in heaven.

O human soul ! as long as thou canst so
  Set up a mark of everlasting light
Above the howling senses, ebb and flow,

To cheer thee, and to right thee if thou roam,
  Not with lost toil thou laborest through the night;
Thou mak'st the heaven thou hop'st indeed thy home.

MODERN IDOLATRY.

A

SERMON

BY

O. B. FROTHINGHAM,

PREACHED IN

LYRIC HALL,

SIXTH AVENUE, BETWEEN FORTY-FIRST AND FORTY-SECOND STREETS,

September 28th, 1873.

NEW YORK:
D. G. FRANCIS, 17 ASTOR PLACE.
1873.

O. B. FROTHINGHAM

Residence, No. 50, West Thirty-sixth St.

TRUSTEES.

OLIVER JOHNSON, *President.*

MERRITT TRIMBLE, *

HENRY T. BROWN,

HENRY J. NEWTON,

JOHN H. CHEEVER,

JOHN W. BIGELOW,

JOHN H. NICHOLS,

CHARLES WATROUS.

CALVERT VAUX.

PUBLICATION COMMITTEE.

OLIVER JOHNSON,

WILLIAM H. WOODMAN.

TREASURER.

MERRITT TRIMBLE,

21 Platt Street.

SECRETARY.

GEORGE W. MILLAR,

Office, No. 10 Spruce St.

MODERN IDOLATRY.

"Thou shalt offer no false incense."

I take these words from one of the oldest of the Hebrew scriptures, and make my application of them to the last generation of living men.

My subject this morning is Modern Idolatry. To many persons the phrase may seem to contain a contradiction in terms. "Is idolatry modern?" many will say; "we had supposed it to be the most ancient thing in the world—a thing practised ages and ages ago, and ages and ages ago abandoned; a subject for antiquarian research, not for modern apprehension. We have no idols of gold, or silver, or brass; no statues of metal, or of wood; no carved images standing in our churches, except for decoration. We kneel before no painted figure; we look up with awe to no bright canvas." True, and, if idolatry were the worship of a visible image, just. But is idolatry the

worship of a visible image? Undoubtedly it is, or was, with multitudes of the illiterate, the ignorant, the gross, the sensual; but it never in the world was confessed to be such by reasoning people.

The moment men began to think, they pierced the mask, and went behind the image to the deity it symbolized. Adoration of the image itself is never admitted. When the early Christian writers, assailing paganism in Greek or Roman cities, charged the worshippers in the temples with bowing before shapes of wood or stone, they denied it with indignation; they said: "We do nothing of the kind; we do not adore the image, but the divinity which is greater than the image; the image is but a sign, a symbol, an assistance to feeling; it suggests the deity, but does not enshrine him; it is a link in a chain, not a terminus; it assists our eye, and, through the eye, the emotion, only by way of mediation. Dash the image, the God will remain." So when the Protestant reformers, contending with Romish theologians, charged the priests with teaching and the people with practising idolatry, and pointed to the supplicating crowds prostrate before the image of the Madonna, or the form of the Crucified, the apologist replied in the very language the pagan apologists had used before: "The form is a symbol, a representation, an emblem; not a deity. We do not worship the tawdry doll on

the altar, but the pure Madonna in the skies; not the figure on the crucifix, but the Christ who sits at the right hand of God the Father; not the statue of martyr, prophet, or saint, but the martyrs, prophets, and saints themselves, who shed down grace from heaven. The vulgar like these things, because they like toys, but the thoughtful understand." And so, when the Rationalist confronts the Protestant with the same charge, saying: "Your Bible is a fetish; you worship a printed book; your Jesus is a fetish; you idolize an individual man," the Protestant replies in the same spirit: "We worship the spirit behind the book, the Word which voices itself in the book, not the book. The letter is nothing; the Word is all. Nor is it the individual man Jesus that we adore; it is the Christ in the man Jesus, the Christ who is invisible, immortal, eternal; the source of all spiritual life."

History shows us that idolatry has been unavoidable. The ancient Persians worshipped light—the finest symbol of pure and absolute perfection that we can imagine—the Uncreated Light. But the Uncreated Light is inconceivable. The Uncreated Light takes form as a sun, a moon, a multitude of sparkling stars; the people who would fain worship nothing but the Uncreated Light are found kneeling to the king of day or to the queen of night; when those were absent,

and darkness prevailed, they lighted candles, which then became, instead, symbols of the light uncreated. The vulgar looked no higher than the candle. In Rome, the vestal virgins had for their sacred office the perpetual watching and tending of the holy lamps; it was a deadly sin to let the lamps go out. There again was the ancient Oriental light worship. The priests in the Roman Catholic churches light candles and keep them burning through the sacred office of the mass; the candles on the altar are the fires of the vestal virgins. The light-worship of the old Persians is repeated; the ancient idolatry is renewed again, and yet not idolatry except with the vulgar; because the light is a symbol, and not a god.

Moses did his utmost to rescue his people from idolatry. They came from the land of Egypt, where idols were numerous and of every form; and to prevent their lapsing again into any species of image-worship, the law was published: "Thou shalt not make unto thee any graven image, or the likeness of anything that is in heaven above, or in the earth beneath, or in the water under the earth," a comprehensive prohibition of star worship, and all other adoration, whether of gods in the human or creaturely form. I am Myself the I AM—JEHOVAH; —Absolute Being; the One that was, and is, and shall be. The deity announces a name, and not a proper name either, but the tense

of a Hebrew verb. The name became an idol; the name was made sacred; miraculous properties were ascribed to it; none might write it with impure hands; the piece of paper upon which it was inscribed was holy; it was impious to tear it or tread upon it. Visitors to the ancient city of Prague, in Bohemia, are shown a venerable Hebrew temple, the interior walls whereof are black with the grime of hundreds of years; the sacristan tells him that the reason the church is black is, that somewhere on the walls the name of Jehovah is written, and if they should undertake to clean the church, the name might be obliterated and the building lose its sanctity.

You cannot escape from idolatry. If you think of deity at all, you think as a man thinks;—you think men's thoughts, limited by the scope of the human intellect. Nobody on the face of the planet ever thought or ever will be able to think of deity except as a man, because the finite mind is conditioned. This thought of deity is an image on the mind, a conception, a figure, more or less carefully outlined. The only question is, whether a people are inclined to make this mental image visible or not. If they are, they surround themselves with images; otherwise they have none. But the image on the mind remains, and it is the essential image. To pay divine honors to that, is idolatry.

It is not our fashion to make images; we are not an imaginative people. The Greeks were; the Egyptians were; the old Indians were; but modern people form mental images, and worship them. What if we do create no images of deity; we have them in our minds. Suppose they were to start to life; suppose that the conception which we hold to be venerable and sacred before all others—the conception before which we bow in the silence of our closets, or the stillness of our thoughts, or the solitude of our private purposes—suppose that these mental images were to assume visible form; what should we behold? The same figures precisely, the same images, that formerly were worshipped as gods in Greece and Rome. The image of Bacchus would stand over the portal of the drinking-houses and gin-shops; the image of the terrestrial Venus would grace the entrance to houses of ill-repute; the image of the god Plutus would look down on the officers of our banks; the statue of the goddess Fortuna would have a niche in our insurance offices; Mercury, the god of trickery, would be worshipped visibly, as of old, in the gambling-houses, where men steal each other's money and call it play; in every concert-room, music-hall, gallery of art, would stand conspicuous the figure of the divine and gracious Apollo; the soldier would pay vows to warlike Mars;

the man of ambition would be discovered offering incense to the awful shape of Jupiter or Juno. Every god and goddess of the old heathen mythology would come to life again, not as now—as ornaments on our walls or in our parlors—but as deities before which worshippers must bow prostrate.

Every form of idolatry has its own characteristics: the characteristics of the popular genius, that gives it shape. The Greeks worshipped Beauty; the Romans worshipped Strength. What do *we* worship? What is the characteristic of the modern idolatry—the idolatry of New York, for instance? It certainly is not Beauty; it certainly is not Science; it is not Learning; it is not Culture; it is not Art: call it *Power*; and perhaps all worship is at last worship of the strongest. The Greeks thought Beauty the strongest; some may think Love the strongest; others Wisdom. What do *we* think the strongest? What is *our* symbol of omnipotence? I answer, MONEY; *Wealth* is with us the strongest thing—and it *is* the strongest thing today. What is our civilization but the visible glorifying of wealth? What are our great rich cities but testimonies to the power of wealth? It is wealth that subdues the stubborn ground. It is wealth that covers the continent with railways. It is wealth that sets up the telegraph, and makes the subtle thread of flame tingle through the very bosom of the deep. It

is wealth that bridges the river; that makes the ocean a highway; that tunnels the mountain; that says to the rocks of adamant, "Be ye removed and cast into the sea," and it is done. It is wealth that brings all the points of the inhabited world together, and makes the deserts blossom like the rose. Wealth is the strongest thing. Therefore, wealth is one symbol of Deity. The intelligent regard it as a symbol. The unintelligent confound it with the God, and pay to it divine honors. Modern idolatry is, first of all, worship of wealth; and a strange worship it is.

There never was a stranger under the sun. A man highly respected, with every reason for his being respected, comfortable in his material circumstances, of competent means, well-connected, honorably related, is found to be abusing trusts, putting public money into his private pocket, entering, it is suspected, into a conspiracy to defraud his fellow men—his very neighbors, perhaps—multiplying his goods dishonestly, his wife knowing nothing about it, his children utterly unconscious, his intimate friends unable to believe it when they are told; a whole community aghast at a disclosure of long-practised and cunningly-concealed turpitude. He is ruined, his name is connected with opprobrium and covered with disgrace, his wife is broken-hearted, his children are doomed to bear a burden of reproach all their lives.

Examples of such idolatry are common. What does it mean? What did the man want? He had money enough for all his uses. He could have commanded easily more than he had. Power? He had as much power as he could wield; if he had had millions, he could not have achieved any higher success; he had not manhood enough to command what he already possessed. What, then, did he want? Money! Why? Money! For what purpose? Money! What did he propose to do with it? Money! What was his ambition? Money! What was he aspiring after? Money! For what did he offer up himself, his wife, his children, his reputation, his good name, everything a man should prize in the world? Money! He could not have told what he wanted beside. He could have given no explanation of his conduct. He could not have answered the plain question: "Why, friend, are you pursuing this dream?" He was worshipping his idol; and when men worship idols, they do not consider. Therefore, I speak of the *worship* of wealth, the *idolatry* of wealth! There is such an idolatry. The common people—I mean rude, unintelligent people—fancy that wealth possesses some charm, some magical power,—a deep witchery,—communicates a secret and subtle advantage that gives its possessor control over the universe, and makes him really a deity, privileged to alter laws, to suspend the order

of the world, to counteract the rule that governs human affairs.

In the ages of faith it was supposed that the man of faith—that is, the man who made open confession of belief, said his prayers dutifully, told his beads, supported his priest, contributed handsomely to the temple service, erected a memorial chapel, purchased a kind of immunity by virtue of his so doing, which protected him from the ordinary chances and contingencies that beset the path of his fellow-men; nothing, it was supposed, would hurt him: he was safe, not only for the future, but for the present; his vessel would not sink, or if it did sink, he would be saved; no wind would blow adverse to him; no earthquake would unsettle his walls; he could take no disease: he might live as he chose with impunity; he was superior to the ordinances of nature, above the common chances of men; he carried a charm that saved him from the calamities to which all the others were subject. Something of the same feeling attaches now, in the minds of vulgar people, to wealth. There is a fancy that a rich man is superior to the laws of nature, that he can set them aside, tamper with them, trifle with them; that he is above conventionalities; may cheat, and not fail; may practise knavery, and not be discovered; may conduct an illegitimate business, and escape the usual penalties; he is regarded as being

above criticism; everybody knows what hotel he stops at; everybody knows what train he takes; when he goes upon the street, the papers make report thereof; he is the vicegerent, the vicar, the pope of the modern world. The idol believes the idolator; the image takes the worshipper at his word; supposes its gilt to be gold; believes the paint to represent the pure color of his inward being; the incense to stand for the odor of his own sanctity. He becomes arrogant, supercilious, cruel; cares for nothing but himself; is perfectly willing that a hundred or a thousand people should be wronged and ruined, provided his own convenience is not touched; walks like a lord over the surface of creation, and looks with calm, serene unconcern upon convulsions that are shaking humbler dwellings in pieces. And knowing this, I could not help thinking, all through the past week, of awful distress, and more awful apprehension, amid the palpable sorrows and agonies of so many people—which I could sympathize with as heartily as any one—I could not help thinking, I say, all the week, that there might be, after all, an incidental advantage, at least an incidental compensation, in the commercial evil. If the catastrophe could only shake the vulgar faith in the immunities of wealth—could but make people fairly believe that the rich man was peccable and vulnerable—that the

laws of nature had a hold upon him as inflexible as upon the poorest working drudge in the street—that if he cheated, he would break—that if he did an illegitimate business, he would fail—if he presumed too much on his own strength, or the confidence of the community, or the supernatural power of his name and standing, or on the assistance of any occult forces that seemed hitherto to have befriended him and enabled him to evade the consequence of a false principle, he would have to suffer for it; that nothing in this world succeeds but justice—that the rich man must pay his debts as well as the poor man—that there must be a righteous exchange and an equitable adjustment sooner or later—that the pure, inevitable, inexorable truth will be vindicated and made apparent, and that no man, or clique of men, or "ring," or nation of men, can counteract or shake, dazzle or hoodwink, for a single instant, the eternal equities that preside over the world,—such a result would be cheaply earned by a dozen financial panics. In the early days, when the Christians were fighting with paganism, a leader, with his troop of men, came to the door of a temple where an affrighted multitude had clustered for their last refuge, and which they believed was unassailable. A blow of the battle-axe broke down the door, and the invaders rushed in. The appalled worshippers were crowding around the

statue of their god, clung to his knees, and felt safe as long as they had their hands upon his person. The stout soldier, battle-axe in hand, made straight up to the image, leapt upon its pedestal, and, to the utter dismay of the worshippers, struck it a blow in the forehead. The abject people lifted up their hands in amazement, expecting to see the assailant wither away in a moment and his troop brushed like ashes from the floor. Instead of that, they saw the idol fall to the earth, shattered, motionless, incapable of moving a hand, unable to lift a finger, to speak a word even in its own behalf; then they abandoned the god who could not protect himself; the fall of the idol was the conversion of the people. Ah! if this idol of wealth, simply as wealth, without regard to its ulterior uses, could be so shattered and could fall, there would be a greater reformation of religion than Luther ever dreamed of.

Side by side with this idol of wealth, a companion to it, sits another, THE IDOL OF SHOW. The worship of *what seems to be* something, follows instantly on the worship of wealth, which gives everything. They who have the wealth, make display of it. They who have it not, make display without it. They must *seem* to have it, and must give other people to suppose that they have it. Money is the god; and if you are not fortunate enough to have the god in person, you must

have a picture that looks like him hanging on the wall, a statue of him standing on the table. Hence the worship of display, the passion for outward appearance, external decoration.

It is conspicuous everywhere. Behold it in dress. See the woman in the street; she is arrayed in the height of fashion—the costliest of silk, the nicest velvet, the most exquisite of artificial flowers in the hat, the daintiest of gloves. Follow her to her home; she wears calicoes, and the cheapest of calicoes too, and soiled calicoes besides, all day long, and week after week. She is loose and careless of her appearance in private, in order that when she appears in the street she may be mistaken for a dweller on the Fifth Avenue.

Behold it in houses! Live in a stone-front house, if you can: if you cannot, live in a house that has a front in imitation of stone,—a house with a wooden façade painted brown. Behind the façade everything may be cheap and mean; the rooms uncarpeted, the floors dirty, no decorations on the walls, seats hard and bare of drapery. The *appearance* is the thing; not the reality.

See how it appears in modes of living. The worshipper of show will give a great banquet once a year, a grand ball once a winter, an occasional breakfast or supper; and in order that this may be well done, will

live on vegetables and tripe for the rest of the time. There is so much money; it will enable its possessor to have a comfortable and cheerful table all the year, to be humbly content, modestly prosperous. But in that there is no distinction. There must be a grand demonstration which shall get into the papers; comfort and respectability are sacrificed to the display.

Religion catches the contagion. What is the meaning of the gorgeous churches that are rising in New York, magnificent in architecture, stately in adornment, brilliant with azure and gold, with lofty pillars, spacious domes, frescoed ceilings, and brave windows of colored glass? What is the meaning of it all? Do these things express pure, simple, undefiled religion? Do they attest the growth of sincere faith? Ah, no; that, we fear, is decaying. Not so does spirituality express itself. This is an image: does it reveal a deity or hide one? Is it a face or a mask? In an earnest age, it might be a face. In an age of seeming, is it so? May it not be designed to cover up decrepitude, to make it appear that there is a God where there is none? It may well be suspected that in the absence of seriousness the painter is called in with his colors, the decorator with his pencil, the artist with his drawings, the mason and architect with their devices, to producing effects! *Effects*, always *effects!* Even the Methodists have caught the disease; the

only sect that has not, is the staunch little sect of Friends, who stand up to the simplicity of their architecture, and cannot be tempted from their traditional homeliness by any of the gauds of the world.

The excuse commonly given for these things is, that they are beautiful. If they were, there would be some force in the plea. But are they? They are gaudy, resplendent, but are they beautiful? Even if they were, the law of things is, that beauty follows use, not precedes it or supersedes it. If beauty precedes or supersedes use, then beauty degrades, demoralizes, and brings people down to unveracity. The result is, falsehood in every department of life—falsehood of institutions; falsehood of dress; falsehood of manners; falsehood of living; falsehood of architecture; falsehood in clothes; falsehood in inventories; falsehood in subscription papers; falsehood of signboards; falsehood that eats out the very sincerity of being; and the end whereof is, that the deity dies within the shrine, and the shrine collapses over the deity—and deity, shrine, and worshippers, all perish together.

I must not omit to speak of yet one more form into which this modern idolatry inevitably passes—the form of Pleasure. The worship of wealth brings the worship of show, and as inevitably that is accompanied by the worship of Pleasure. Men want money for what it gives; it gives to them what they desire.

They desire the things that they are capable of appreciating. If they are cultivated, they desire cultivated things; if uncultivated, uncultivated things. Now, when an immense multitude of people, who are uncultivated, undisciplined, untrained, uneducated in the higher meanings of nature or society, suddenly find themselves possessed of wealth, what do they do with it? Buy with it what they wish; they wish fine dress, fine houses, fine tables, full wine-cellars, fast horses, and fast women. They wish what feeds their animal appetites; grand entertainments, sumptuousness, splendor. It always has been so; it never can be otherwise. It was so in the Old World; it is so in the New. It is no worse in the New World than it is in the Old: not so bad as it used to be in the Old, by very much.

The modern idolatry makes Pleasure primary. The old motto used to be: "Be good, and you will be happy." The men who believed in that principle strove to be good, to be truthful, faithful, generous, devoted, kind, pure, true; they accepted the happiness that came with excellence, or the contentment that came, if happiness did not. Their principle dispensed with happiness—substituted blessedness for it. Now, the proverb is reversed. Men say: "Be happy, and you will be good."

The principle is demoralizing. It encourages the

natural impulse, consecrates passion, deifies affection, makes instinct judge of rectitude, bids them seek what they wish at the moment, and wait for goodness to come, if it will, in its own time.

Now, the only cure for idolatry is the substitution of a worthy for an unworthy conception of that which is supreme. It is not the downfall of visible images, not the melting of the statues of wood and metal, or the shattering of the figures of stone; but the substitution of a worthy for an unworthy conception of that which is adorable. How shall we obtain that? It will take generations on generations; it is the fruit of education and culture. Every good man and every good woman must strive for it, pray for it, plan for it, live for it, set the example of one who desires it, and bases his existence upon it. Every teacher must bear it in mind; every controller of the young must take it to heart; every good merchant, every able financier, every noble lawyer, every just judge, every worthy citizen, must remember that the only way of saving the community from debasing idolatry is to elevate the thoughts and desires of the people above the routine of animal pleasure, animal satisfaction, animal hope—in a word, to substitute for the worship of the Strongest, the worship of the Purest, the Saintliest, the Loveliest, the Best.

THE PURITAN SPIRIT.

A

SERMON

BY

O. B. FROTHINGHAM,

PREACHED IN

LYRIC HALL,

SIXTH AVENUE, BETWEEN FORTY-FIRST AND FORTY-SECOND STREETS,

December 21st, 1873.

NEW YORK:
D. G. FRANCIS, 17 ASTOR PLACE

1873.

THE PURITAN SPIRIT.

The approach of the 22d of December recalls one of those events that are turning-points in the history of civilization, an event of vast importance to the United States, and therefore to mankind,—I mean the landing of a small band of English Puritans at Plymouth, Massachusetts. The preacher feels that he cannot employ his hour better than in speaking, not of the historical incidents of the event, not of its political significance, not of its bearing on the general or special interests of the country at large, but on the principle it imported into the New World. My subject will be, the Puritan Spirit; by which I understand, not so much the Puritan institutions or doctrines, as the temper, the tone, the interior faith, the moral starting-point by which the doctrines and institutions were determined.

The Puritan customs and institutions were of several shades. The Puritan spirit was one and the same. Puritans were of all classes and conditions, and according to class and condition were their incidental doings. There were among them poor

and rich, humble and exalted, ignorant and lettered, rude and refined, foolish and wise. There were peasants among them, artisans, traders; and there were gentlemen and ladies, courtiers, scholars, poets, statesmen, learned divines. There were coarse fanatics, and splendid enthusiasts, violent image breakers, and fine idealists, haters of culture and glorifiers of elegance. Of course, the incidental views of these people varied according to their dispositions and condition. Some were persecutors, others not; some were democrats, others not; but at heart they were in full accord. Their faith and hope were the same. They all were made to drink of the same spirit. Their gifts were various, their soul was one.

What was that soul? What characterized that spirit? We can say, in a single word: The Puritans were the Protestants of the Protestants. They took the Reformation at its word with straightforward English manliness, and forthwith applied its principles to the concerns of their worldly estate.

That principle was, in the religious speech of the time, justification by faith; in our own simpler language, the direct spiritual intercourse between Christ and the believing soul. Their cardinal point was, that the soul which trusted in the merits of Christ, believed his word as written in the Scriptures, and was faithful to the purpose of leading a new life,

enjoyed his intimacy, received from him communications of truth, and inspirations of goodness, guidance, consolation, courage, strength, victory. He was theirs, and they were his. Between them there was no barrier, no reserve, no secret. They met face to face, without mediator or formal introduction, and held such communication as was possible between redeemed and redeemer.

Taking this position, they put themselves outside of every ecclesiastical establishment, whether of Rome or England. Popery and prelacy, priesthood and altar, sacrifice and sacrament, ceremony and symbol, they discarded as needless—nay, as impertinent obstructions. They would have nothing to do with them. They denounced and repudiated them all, sometimes with violence, always with firm decision. The interference of the State with religion, then a thing universally accepted, on the idea that the State, like the Church, was a divine institution, having the secular charge of consciences, they resented as an outrage. The relation between the believing soul and its Christ was a personal matter, in which kings and magistrates had no concern, with which human laws had no business to meddle. Their salvation was their own affair, an affair of tremendous importance, which they must allow no interference with from any quarter. Their eternal felicity depended

on their keeping clear the passage between themselves and their Saviour. They would submit to imprisonment, exile, tortures, death, sooner than permit that channel of grace to be obstructed.

And they did submit to all these. To be an English Puritan in the reign of Henry VIII. and his successors on the throne, was no holiday thing. It involved incessant battle and daily exposure to whatever is most dreaded by man. The terrible experiences of those generations hardened the protesters as steel is hardened by flame and hammer. The alloy of weakness was burned out of them; their faith was wrought into the texture of their frames. They acquired the utmost of endurance, the utmost of sincerity, the utmost of renunciation. They learned how many things, the world deems indispensable, they could live without. The instability of fortune, the precariousness of property, the uncertainty of life, the worthlessness of what men call happiness, all this they learned thoroughly. They learned to make everything secondary to the conscience of truth. Indeed, so tried and toughened were they by misfortune, that it is wonder that any human tenderness was left in them. There would not have been, had they not replenished their hearts from the inexhaustible springs which their faith opened to them. The love of God, the compassion of the Saviour, the promise

of peace, the hope of blessedness, the consciousness of an unbroken communion, recollections of mercy, anticipations of glory, fed with manna their starving hearts. The divine humanity in heaven took the place of the natural humanity that was trodden under foot of men; the Redeemer's pity became theirs.

But the Puritan's faith did more than make him a sturdy protestant against ecclesiastical and secular oppression. It made him, in intention and purpose, the founder of a new order of things. He meditated a new Church, a new State, a new Society. What these must needs be it is easy to conjecture; what they actually were is matter of knowledge.

Their Church was a vital as distinguished from an ecclesiastical organization. Their religion was spiritual; not in our modern use of the word, as being quite free, rational and unsectarian; it was nothing of that kind. The Puritans pledged themselves loyally to the Calvinistic creed, the most severely intellectual statement of Christian truth ever made. They held fast to the Bible, the whole Bible, Hebrew and Christian, Old Testament and New, as the very word of God, inspired in every thought, and divine in every letter; never questioning, or inclining to question, its plenary authority in all matters that concerned the soul. They venerated the Sabbath as

the Lord's Day. They were precise in every point of spiritual culture, punctilious in worship, fervent in prayer, humble and constant in confession. They neglected no means of grace, but used all devout helps to quicken their love for the Saviour. In all this they were far from being free, but prided themselves on their constraints, keeping themselves devoutly within the limits of faith. No skeptics they, or doubters, but believers to the very core of their being.

From ecclesiastical trammels and traditions, however, they were free. Their church was not a hierarchy; they paid duty to no priest, high or low; they made no confession; they brought no sacrifice; they asked no absolution; they built no altar; they offered no gift; they erected no symbol, sign, or image; they had no sacraments, in the Romish sense; the bread and wine contained no god; the water conveyed no regeneration. They elected and ordained their own ministers; they managed their own spiritual affairs. With them the prophet took the place of the priest; the sermon supplanted the ritual; the extemporaneous prayer made good the loss of the printed liturgy. Their simplicity was extreme. The bare soul and the naked reality of God was all they wanted; and this the plain meeting-house gave more satisfactorily than the stately but bewildering cathe-

dral. "They married without a minister, and buried the dead without a prayer." Nay, without a minister they could make shift in respect to the other exercises of their religion. Lay preaching was resorted to on occasion. And, more liberal herein than their descendants, they listened to the word of the Spirit from the mouth of woman. Nor was this all: Heeding the promise, that the Spirit should be poured forth on all flesh; that the sons and daughters should prophesy; that young men should see visions; that out of the mouths of babes and sucklings praise should be perfected, they allowed the young to lift their voices in public assembly. For a brief period, when no ordained pastor was near to bless and distribute the "elements" of communion, they dispensed with them altogether, and did not perceive their spiritual life decrease.

The Puritan government was as sincere as the Puritan church. His faith made him a democrat. Laying such stress, as he did, on the priceless worth of the individual soul; believing, as he did, in the immediate inspiration of the conscience loyal to Christ, he was compelled to be a foe to the despotism of king, magistrate and law. A disciple of St. Paul, he confessed allegiance to the powers that were, as ordained of God—but he raised another question: Were the seeming powers real ones or sham? Were

they powers or pretences? Was Charles II. one of the powers that were? Was James II.? They were weaknesses, imbecilities, not powers. If truly powers, they were ordained of God. But it was the ordinance of God that created them powers, and the validity of that ordination was the matter in dispute. If the ordained of God alone were powers, the evidence that they were ordained of God was to be sought in their characters and lives. Were they believing, faithful men? The oracles of God were the Holy Scriptures. That was the believing conscience which read them aright; and if the powers, as they called themselves, disregarded these, they were deposed.

The Puritans were, therefore, of necessity friends to self-government. They could not be otherwise. They chose their own rulers, appointed their own magistrates, made their own municipal arrangements, framed their own statutes, fashioned their own usages, levied their own taxes; they had no pomps or ceremonies, no titles of rank, no class-privileges, no senseless honors, no needless emoluments. They were a body of freemen, conducting their affairs on the principles of honest business; meeting occasions as they arose, in the resolute way of people who had undertaken to construct a new order of things, and were determined to do it with the least possible fuss or parade. Already, in the cabin of the Mayflower, as

she lies within Cape Cod, these serious men draw up a compact, by which they "Solemnly and mutually, in the presence of God and of one another, covenant and combine ourselves together into a civil body politic, for our better ordering and preservation; and by virtue hereof, to enact, constitute, and frame such just and equal laws, ordinances, acts, constitutions, and offices, from time to time, as shall be thought most meet and convenient for the general good of the colony, unto which we promise all due submission and obedience." This compact was signed by forty-one men, who, in setting their names to it, agreed in the establishment of a pure democracy, in which rich and poor, wise and simple, gentleman and yeoman, stood on an equality, wherein was no lord and no serf, wherein souls were counted, not revenues, and wherein one soul was as good as another.

To be sure, there were qualifications and abatements. The Puritans were human. They lived in their own generation, not in ours. Their democracy was as pure as they could make it; no purer. We have improved on it since their time; but radical improvements are yet to be made. The Puritans admitted no women to the franchise, but in excluding them they sinned against no light, as their descendants do, for such an idea could not have entered their minds. To secure the franchise to all men was a prodigious step.

Is it objected that they did not do even so much as this; that they excluded unbelievers, and limited the franchise to church-members? It is true they did for a short time, and would, perhaps, have done it longer had it been possible to determine who the sincere church-members were, and who the false. In two generations, sixty years, the disfranchisement of those who were not members of some church in the colony was discontinued. But it was deeply consistent when decreed, with their cardinal faith in the need of regeneration for human nature. Their belief in natural depravity was earnest and practical. How could they entrust to it the framing of constitutions, the making of laws, the organization of judiciary and executive, the punishment of crime? To commit the interests of justice, order, peace, virtue, to people born in sin, conceived in iniquity, and alienated from the life of God, were an absurdity that honest men could not fall into. To make the Holy Will supreme is the professed end of all governments. The Puritans saw no way to compass it except by placing the ruling right and power in the hands of those who made the Holy Will the law of their lives; and these were the members of the Christian churches, in good standing. Their government was a society, of which Christ was the living head. If they who, at present, profess the faith of the Puritans were consistent or sincere, they

would labor to restore what the Puritans inaugurated, not by the empty ceremony of putting the name of Christ into the constitution, but by putting the followers of Christ into power. A belief in Calvinism allows none but the regenerate to rule the earth.

The Puritan was a reformer. The task he assumed was nothing less than the remodeling of society according to the divine idea, to establish the kingdom of Christ among men. It was a terrible work, such as in the Old World could not so much as be thought of, but which the New World presented a fair field for attempting. There, the evils that were inveterate in England and even in Holland, had not appeared, and, by wise precautions, might never come. The foundations were to be laid in fresh earth, the furrows of the soil could be sown with the finest of the wheat. Never were purer hearts, more loyal consciences, or more consecrated souls than those that entered on this high undertaking. Austere they were as virtue.

Their moral code was the Bible, the veritable word of God Himself, as they believed; and the Hebrew portion of the Bible in preference to the Christian, the Old Testament in preference to the New, because it was more explicit in its directions. The New Testament gave them doctrine, the Old Testament gave them laws. In the Gospels and Epistles

they learned what they were to believe in order to be saved. In the chronicles of the Old Testament, the records of Israel, the books of enactment and prophecy, they learned what in any particular emergency they were to do. These were Jehovah's express ordinances, given for the benefit of a people situated very much as they felt themselves to be; ordinances covering all the concerns of life, from the selection of rulers to the washing of utensils. Could they do better than adopt them as they stood, and apply them as conscientiously as the circumstances permitted?

This is what, with the purest purposes, they endeavored to do. Let those sneer at the experiment who will, I will not. Let those who will, call it foolish, visionary, fanatical, make sport of the whimsical precision, cry out at the austerity, lift their hands in horror at the cruelties and revolting barbarities. Let them recite the stories of whipping, mutilating, hanging. Their code was severe. They punished idolatry, witchcraft, blasphemy, murder, either wilful or in passion, adultery, and other crimes, with death. Fines were numerous, and, for what we consider venial offences, ignominious punishments were common. But if the code was severe, it was none of their making, nor did they adopt it on account of its cruelty because their hearts were hard. It was to the best of their persuasion the code of the Almighty,

which they might or might not sympathize with, but which they were not at liberty to disobey. Nor were they unmindful of the gentler features that characterized its provisions.

The Puritans wanted, and insisted on having virtue, and they succeeded in large measure in securing it. "One might dwell among them," said a chronicler, "from year to year and not see a drunkard, or hear an oath, or meet a beggar." They were in love with justice. The law for one was law for all, for peasant and gentleman, for man and woman. In the case of adultery both parties met the same penalty: in the case of seduction, the seducer must marry his victim. The law that punished the undutiful child, punished also the unfaithful parent. Says a distinguished historian, Bancroft, "hardly a nation of Europe has as yet made its criminal law so humane as that of early New England. A crowd of offences was at one sweep banished from the catalogue of capital crimes."

Such as I have described it, was the Puritan spirit. Its source was the Protestant doctrine of justification by faith; its rule was the Scripture of the Old and New Testaments; its aim was the salvation of the soul in the future life, and the establishment here of a perfect state in which people might be fitly prepared for the kingdom of heaven.

As we consider these points well, it becomes evident that this spirit belonged to a special and peculiar epoch of history. Resting, as it did, on a theology, demanding, as it did, implicit faith in the Scriptures, looking, as it did, towards the revival of a condition of things that belonged to a remote age and a strange people, it could not survive a change in its fundamental beliefs. Take away the infallibility of the Bible letter, weaken the opinion that human nature is radically corrupt and needs a radical regeneration, loosen the hold on the personal Christ, and the very ground on which the Puritan builded is taken away. He rested on faith in the immediate inspiration of the believing soul. That faith gone, or shaken, his strength went from him as life departs from a severed limb. The Puritan spirit dies with the Puritan creed; and the Puritan creed is dead. Even its nominal adherents have so qualified it that it is no longer the thing it was. It only remains to confess this, and act in full conformity with the conclusions the fact necessitates. The Puritan's claim to infallibility must at once be disallowed. There can be no justification for those who, discarding the Puritan's creed, perpetuate in form the Puritan spirit. The prophet must abdicate in favor of the teacher. He that formerly uttered oracles in the name of God, must now be content to communicate knowledge in the name of science.

No class may presume to reckon its members as of the "elect," or pronounce with authority on the beliefs or customs of another. There is no monopoly of righteousness any longer; none are privileged to judge their fellows in the name of conscience, for conscience has lost its inspired code, and must feel after the truth among the facts of experience.

Let us leave generalities, and come to details of application. Once within the last half century the Puritan spirit has displayed its temper in a way that commands respect. Once have men, who were but partially Puritans in creed, spoken with an authority that made itself acknowledged. I refer to the struggle with Slavery. The men who precipitated that struggle and conducted it, still professed the Puritan dogma, though they abandoned it or essentially modified it as the war went on. But in each stage of the reform the genuine spirit of the Puritan appeared. They spoke in the name of God, with the tone of prophets, as if commissioned from above. They denounced, as essentially evil, as a sin, the mischief they assailed. They dealt with it, not as a blunder, a solecism, a stupendous piece of folly, a mistake in economy, a wretched delusion, but as something altogether different—as something much worse than a crime before men—as a guilt in the sight of God. The slaveholders were upbraided in such terms as the

Hebrew prophets used when speaking of idolatrous kings and apostate subjects. The language of the Old Testament was frequently in their mouths. It was justified, in a measure, at least, by the circumstances of the case, by the essential character of American slavery, by its glaring inconsistency with republican institutions, by the arrogant and almost blasphemous tone of its defenders. The sentiment of Christian people of other nations was so unanimous and deep that it constituted, as it were, a tribunal to which appeal might be made as to the declared will of the Almighty. There was a body of conscience, a published word, an unwritten but intelligible scripture from which the abolitionist read the law. The moral sentiment of the civilized world made itself articulate on that subject to a degree that acquitted Mr. Garrison and his colleagues of presumption.

But that case was peculiar, and is never likely to occur again; and if it should, the condemnation of Christendom would be pronounced in the name of civilization, of policy, of economy, of peace, order, prosperity, progress, not in the name of God. When the time shall come for dealing with slavery in Cuba, men will not quote the Old Testament, demanding unconditional, immediate emancipation in the name of God; they will call for such an arrangement as shall meet the pressing conditions of the hour, considering

all the circumstances of the case. To speak, as the Puritan did, in the name of God, will be deemed impertinent. The claim of an inspired conscience will be set aside without respect.

Only such as are sure of their election, as the Puritans were, have a right to address their fellow creatures as if they were reprobates. The moral dominion of one class over another is ended. By what title can Germans impose their social customs on the French—or New Englanders theirs on the Germans? Is there any patent-right in virtue? Is there any authority in goodness, or any monopoly of right reason? Can any assume to dictate to their neighbors what they shall eat and drink, or how they shall live? Where is the infallible code? We have a deep respect for the intentions of the men who, in the name of God, demand the suppression of drinking-houses by law, and the absolute destruction of the traffic in intoxicating liquors. But are they not assuming more than the actual state of opinion warrants in laying down so peremptorily the rules by which their fellow-men shall regulate their lives, and virtually assuming that none are righteous but such as conform to their standard?

The question has passed out of the hands of the priests and prophets into the hands of physiologists, economists, and students of social development. We

know well that the social usages of people are inherited and native; that they change very slowly, can never be altered abruptly, and can be abolished only by the gradual increase of enlightenment and taste. There is no body of conscience so general and strong as to put any social custom under the ban. The reformer himself is a man, not a saint, and must take his place in the ranks. Educate and enlighten people if you can, but modestly. The prophetic tone is unbecoming in men who can lay claim to no special illumination.

We may respect the motives of people who would hold society to a rigid rule of purity; who would put an end to prostitution by making it impossible as well as shameful; and would cut off the very sources of temptation by which vice is nourished. But they must not do it in the spirit of Pharisees, or in the name of God. The questions they deal with are among the most delicate that can be proposed. They touch the relations of sex in their whole range, and must be handled, not with "the sword of the Lord and of Gideon," but with the nicest instruments the reason of man can fashion.

We may respect those who hope and labor for the full emancipation of women from all civil and social thraldom; and wish them all good fortune in their endeavors to educate, train, and qualify for positions of

private emolument and public trust, the hitherto and still incapacitated, limited, and disfranchised sex. But we cannot concede their right to dictate, in the name of absolute justice, what the civil and social arrangements of mankind shall be. They must reason, not asseverate; rest in facts, not in feelings; compare notes, not dictate laws. When a physician of judgment and experience modestly suggests facts that have come under his personal observation, and asks the reformers to weigh them, it will not do to call him a traitor to the truth, a false witness, a recreant, and as such arraign him before the bar of humanity. His facts must be met; his arguments answered. There are in this matter no truths so self-evident that they stand for the unquestionable word of the Supreme Wisdom. The first principles are as yet in the womb of reason.

We respect those who take up the cause of the American Indian, are never weary of dwelling on his wrongs, reproach the government with infidelity, the agents with knavery, and the people with culpable indifference; but we question their title to speak as commissioned messengers from the Lord; to sit on the seat of their private opinion as if it was the throne of the Almighty, and to judge the people who demur to their views of race.

We respect those who have at heart the sorrows of

the workingmen, are deeply concerned about the inequitable distribution of property, the monopoly of land and wealth, the mal-adjustment of labor and capital, the virtual serfdom of the industrial class; but we cannot concede their privilege to enunciate their social philosophy as the infallible scripture of the Most High, and to brand as knaves, thieves, and godless spoilers the dissentients from their socialist creed.

An old Puritan, citing the provisions of the Sabbatical year, might say: "Once in every half century all property must revert to the community; debts must be cancelled, estates divided, fortunes equalized, and all take a fresh start." An old Puritan, speaking in the name of an inspired prophet, might declare that usury is a crime, but the student of political economy will merely smile at the fanaticism.

We do not deal, as the Puritans did, with social questions, even of the gravest import. They pronounced the law—we study the facts. They took the position of people whom the Christ had chosen and sanctified; we take the position of people who are feeling their way through the maze of human problems. They openly asserted, as a fact, the establishment of an open communication between the Perfect Mind and theirs; we are conscious of the great imperfection of all minds, of the necessity of dismissing

prejudice, of laying aside assumption, of crucifying conceit, and becoming humble students of the world in whose arrangements the Perfect Mind has expressed itself. They quoted the thoughts of God in the Bible; we quote the thoughts of God in the universe. They appealed to revelation; we appeal to science.

The mistake of the Puritans was, that they made their personal and peculiar conscience the standard of general morality. They made conscience their law-book, and conformed legislation to its decrees. The error was inseparable from their position. It was involved in their religious faith, which declared that only the righteous could decree righteousness, and that the unrighteous must submit. The saints must rule the world. "Do ye not know that the saints shall judge the world?" "Know ye not, that the unrighteous shall not inherit the Kingdom of God?" "Know ye not, that we shall judge angels? how much more things that pertain to this life?" So spoke the Apostle Paul, their favorite authority. They obeyed. They would have been infidels had they done otherwise.

The error was as noble as it was necessary, for the Puritans actually dwelt on a high tableland of principle, from which the levels of ordinary existence seemed valleys of the shadow. They were men of the utmost consecration and purity, the deepest hu-

mility, the most prayerful wisdom. If any people ever earned the right to lay down the moral law for their weaker and more passionate fellow-mortals, they were the people.

They were excusable from their inherent nobleness; they were excusable, too, from their ignorance of many things that we know. Their learning was confined to a few books; their acquaintance with mankind was limited; their commerce with other minds was meagre; the world they lived in was narrow; their range of thought and observation was circumscribed. In their day there was no mingling of races as now; human intercourse was in its infancy; there was no popular literature, no science; what we call *sociology* was not dreamed of. The Bible was to them history, science, philosophy, ethics, poetry, biography, law, as well as religion. Their error resulted from their using faithfully the means at their command.

But a similar error with us is without excuse. It is the wilfulness of personal conceit. It lacks the element of nobleness, for the faith it rested on is gone. It is without the justification of ignorance, for in an age of books, travel, popular information on every subject, the ignorance cannot be pardoned. None but the foolish or knavish have the impudence to call themselves the "elect." None but the arrogant, the

overbearing, or the cunning, venture to claim for their convictions a greater worth than is warranted by their intelligence. The "ex cathedrâ" style of argument, in whatever cause, even the best, from whatever persons, even the noblest, is out of place and time. The dominion of conscience over others is at an end.

The dominion of conscience over others, I say; not the dominion of conscience over self. Here it is still supreme. And in maintaining its supremacy, we may profitably fall back on the grand traditions of the Puritans. Their essential majesty was the majesty of the personal conscience. "New England," says the historian, "was a religious plantation," "a colony of conscience." A tremendous force of self-respect shot the Puritans up high like a granite peak, and made of every soul a Gibraltar fortress. They were planted in the verities of moral conviction; they were braced against the bulwarks of eternal law. How incorruptible they were! How direct, sincere, plain spoken! They set on themselves an everlasting value. They pledged themselves to duty, and meant to keep the pledge. They could not afford to lie or cheat, or compromise themselves with fraud. No "back pay" for them, very little pay of any sort, no pay whatever except for honest work. Life was too short to be wasted in efforts to obtain offices they could not fill, to engage in gigantic speculations for their immediate

profit, or to be immersed in vulgar schemes for promotion; and life was too precious in its interests to be smutched and shamed with plots for plundering the public on false pretences. The Puritan was a man of honor. He did not think it reputable to truckle, and lobby, and dodge, and swindle, and shuffle, to creep into sinecures, cuddle down in the public nest, live in official indolence on poor men's earnings, and spend time in evading the law that bids man work if he would eat. He liked plain dealing and square accounts. He was no sentimentalist. Justice before charity was his motto; duty before delight; law before love; truth before everything.

His weak-kneed descendant, bewitched with lascivious or mercenary temptations, pleads that his Puritan ancestor had supports for conscience that he has not, and declines to be loyal to the moral sentiment on the ground that Scripture being invalidated, and hell abolished, and the supplies of divine grace cut off, he is no longer amenable to the same tribunal, and may make inclination, policy, interest, appetite, his law. But the Puritan did not owe his moral *feelings* to the Bible—only his moral *applications*. The foundations of his conscience were laid in efforts to adjust himself honorably to his human conditions. These human conditions he found, but did not create. They were assigned by Providence; they were inherited

from ancestors; they were products of mankind's experience so far as they had gone. The Bible helped him to be faithful; faith helped him; his personal sense of the Christ helped him; he was helped by his hope of heaven, his fear of hell.

But where he had one Bible we have several; where he had the literature of a single people we have the literatures of many people; for his narrow range of experience we have the accumulated experiences of multitudes of people in the most various circumstances; if he was conscious of intimate personal relations with a single divine being, we are conscious of intimate relations, and most vital ones, too, with great communities of people, from whom all our life is derived, and who need us as much as we need them. Is there no hell for us to dread—the hell of a degraded and opprobrious life? Is there no heaven for us to hope for—the heaven of the heart's purity and the world's praise?

Pity it is that men should drop the best portion of the Puritan's legacy—his nobility of conscience—and should keep the less valuable part of it—the habit of imposing theories. The former bequest becomes more and more priceless as the years go by; the latter, in the same ratio, depreciates.

What in the coming time shall take the place of that grand race of men? What new spirit will adopt

and continue their essential work of mending the roads on which humanity travels? Where shall we look for the earnestness, the devotion to the public good, the hatred of perfidy, the veneration for order and law, the reverence for justice, the serious loyalty, the sober truth that animated those stern, but tender souls? The reformers, the regenerators of the New World, whence shall they come? We will be thankful for the new spirit of progress that is moving the best minds to steady efforts to improve the condition of the society they live in, for the increasing number of men and women who, spurred by the dread of evil, or allured by the hope of good, with less rapture, perhaps, but with scarcely less consecration, with less enthusiasm of private anticipation, but with an undiminished sense of responsibility, give their lives to their generation.

Devotion to the law of evolution must match devotion to the law of revolution. Interest in the earthly condition of fellow-men must occupy the room once filled by interest in their religious welfare. Pity for human wretchedness must discharge the office formerly discharged by pity for the prospective danger of damnation. The need of salvation, as deep as ever, must be construed as need of health and sanity. Manhood and womanhood, as precious as ever, must be tenderly nurtured by those whose

faith in the inexhaustible capacities of human nature is as absolute as the Puritan's faith in the infinite resources of the Christ. The descendants of those great men can cherish no less a faith than this. Let them cherish this, and the awful shades of their ancestors will smile on them from their holy seats.

A

PLEA FOR AMUSEMENT.

A

SERMON

BY

O. B. FROTHINGHAM,

PREACHED IN

LYRIC HALL,

SIXTH AVENUE, BETWEEN FORTY-FIRST AND FORTY-SECOND STREETS,

January 18th, 1874.

NEW YORK:
D. G. FRANCIS, 17 ASTOR PLACE

1874.

A PLEA FOR AMUSEMENT.

I take as the subject of my discourse this morning —Amusements. I would make a plea for amusements. I have searched the Bible in vain for a text to introduce it. There is none that meets the case. The Bible is not a book of sports. It was written with other aims, and in other interests, by men who were concerned with priestly institutions and the lofty interior states of the mind. That amusement is not commended there no more reflects on the value of amusement than to have no mention there reflects on science or art. The men of the Old Testament had little leisure for play, and little disposition to laugh. Their work was serious; they were by nature earnest, grave, intense, passionate with a passion for luxury, dominion, splendor, but with tastes uncultivated in the direction of entertainment. Their appetite for pleasurable excitement was fed by their religion. That gave them music, color, scenic display, dramatic incident and variety. The frequent festi-

vals, the elaborate ritual, the splendid costumes of the priests, the glad processions, the noisy songs, the ringing of harps, the blowing of trumpets, did for them what public amusements do for us, only more successfully and for a greater proportion of the people.

The New Testament men did not care for even so much diversion as this. They were absorbed in the business of spiritual reform to such a degree that existence seemed too short for the ordinary concerns of life, home duties, household affairs, the interests of society and the state. All time not spent directly for Christ and the world to come was time wasted. Yet they, too, had their recreations in social gatherings and love feasts, where they gave vent to the joyous emotions of their hearts.

In the Middle Ages, the Church gladdened the desolation of popular existence with the "miracle plays," as they were called, which blended piety with amusement, and served at once the religious purposes of the priests, and the object of lightening life's heavy burdens. The little mountain village of Oberammergau, picturesque in summer, a dream of loveliness during the short season when the grass is green, and the rivulets dance, and the mountains display their endless glories of light and shadow, in the long winter's gloom, with loneliness, cold and poverty, is gladdened by the preparations for the Passion Play, in which all

the villagers join. To practise the music, allot the parts, arrange the tableaux, group the crowds, cut the garments, rehearse the libretto, occupies the long dreary evenings that would be cruelly oppressive without the recreation thus afforded.

The Puritans frowned on amusements as frivolities quite unworthy of people who in their fleeting lifetime must find their eternal salvation. Life was too short and too awful for play. They said of laughter, "it is mad." The most refined entertainments would possibly have been despicable in the sight of men inflamed as they were with zeal for divine things. It was, perhaps, quite true that they discouraged bear-baiting because it amused the people—not because it tormented the bears; for their preachers were perpetually insisting on the brevity of human life, and the sin of wasting one of its precious moments; and no high-minded Henry Bergh had arisen, the saviour of the brute creation, to remind men of their duty to the subject creatures. But their antipathy was fairly justified by the character of the popular amusements of their time. They were brutal and licentious to a degree which we can scarcely imagine. The amusements of the people were ruffianly; the bear-baiting, the cock-pit, the prize-ring: the amusements of the gentry, though more elegant, were even more indecent. Such asthetic art as existed was associated with

whatever was execrable in morals and disgusting to a pure mind. To touch the most beautiful things was to touch pitch and be defiled. Grace and loveliness were the most closely connected with lasciviousness. Genius pandered to the worst instincts, and the good man had to repudiate everything that was attractive, because the attraction was, in every instance, to the pit. It is no wonder the Puritans set their faces against the hideous caricatures of pleasure that met them at every turn, and fled, like Joseph from the harlot, to joys that were above the earth. The churchmen were more lenient, because more worldly. But men who had the smallest appreciation of the worth of life, or the dignity of nature, would go joyless all their days rather than soil themselves by communication with panders to the vilest lust. They could live without entertainment; they could not live without purity. They could wear smileless faces; they could not carry about with them darkened hearts. And in this feeling, every worthy descendant of theirs will heartily sympathize.

But the sympathy is not now called for. The cause of the hot antipathy has disappeared, and the antipathy is an affectation. The attitude of society toward amusements has completely changed. They are no longer the idle employments of a frivolous class, the reckless, heartless, pastime of the rich, who dress up

t heir vices for public display, and call in art to set off their infamy. A radical change in the character of amusements has followed. The coarsest diversions have gone out of use. Bear-baiting has disappeared. The stage has dropped its most offensive features. Gentlemen and ladies go on the boards without compromising their character or injuring their reputation. The arts of display and decoration are released from their degrading association with vice. The drama ranks among legitimate professions; the actor takes his place among reputable people. In a word, the stigma is removed. The opprobrium is withdrawn. Amusements are relieved of the ancient ban.

In fact, society assigns to them a new part. Instead of being as they once were, the idle spoilers of idle days, the devices by which people whose occupation was to kill time, were enabled to kill it pleasantly, the foolish pastime of the foolish, debasing and dissipating, they are now become an important means of redeeming time, and turning existence to the best account; a part of the ministry of physical and mental health, a significant portion of the agency that rebuilds the shattered system, and recreates the wasted energies of the will. The spirit that once would have exorcised them, would now gladly recall them, and reinstate them in place. The highest spirit, that professes interest in the moral sanity of

men and women, whose aim and purpose is to save them from one-sided lives, by establishing a happy equilibrium of powers, looks to amusements for aid in its work. Religion that once frowned on them, now pleads for them, in a noble interest of course, but in faith that such interest will not necessarily suffer at their hands. That amusement will take the place of other good things is not claimed; but it will take its own place, and will fill it without detriment to other helpers.

It is not claimed that all need amusement, or that with any it is a permanent want. Persons of large mental resources, of various tastes, of active, versatile tempers, of occupations that employ a large range of faculty, scarcely require amusement at all. High culture often dispenses with it wholly. In every community there are individuals, classes of individuals, to whom the thought of amusement never occurs, to whom all existing amusements are wearisome, who find nothing so depressing as the popular entertainment. The play of their own faculties gives them diversion enough. They to whom work itself is a delight, want and ask and welcome no other. Imagination, fancy, taste, find resources ample and stimulating, as they go along. Yet even here there are exceptions. Herbert Spencer is said to find relaxation from the strain of toil, at the theatre. Theo-

dore Parker, who had resources and outlooks enough, intellectual and social, said to a friend who advised him to slacken speed: "No; I do not need rest; I need fun. A set of boon companions would be more to my purpose than a vacation." A distinguished doctor of divinity in Puritan Boston, when dulled by the routine of professional work, and depressed by daily contact with sorrow, foolishness, and sin, used to steal away to New York, and spend an evening in the little theatre in Chambers Street, where the first comedian of the time banished evil spirits by his irresistible mirth. With the vast majority of men and women, amusement is a sheer necessity. Undeveloped, uncultivated, unelastic, and unpliable, limited in thought, confined in sentiment, constrained in feeling, narrow in sympathy, with few outlooks into a world of beauty, with few amenities or social beguilements, with the smallest means of access to the genial elements of life, the most inadequate remedies for the dullness of their daily pursuits, they instinctively, if not consciously, demand artificial recreation. They must have it, or they sicken and droop. It must be brought to them, and they must be bidden to take it. So strong, so urgent is the necessity for recreation, of a purely creaturely or nervous sort, that they will extract it out of the most unpromising materials. They will make even theology furnish it,

kindling a fire from those driest of sticks to warm their frozen souls in the dense forest of their world. In default of any other drama, they set up the drama of redemption, and crowd in to enjoy the play in which angels perform and the Christ takes the leading part. What class of people get such unalloyed delight from theatres, concerts, opera-houses, nay, from cards, billiards, faro-tables, merry songs, and jolly carouse, as the negro slaves did from their prayer-meetings and love-feasts? The humor that found no gratification in mortal hours revelled in visions of the immortal. Sunday was to them the soul's play-day; piety was their pastime; sacred hymns were their glees, their madrigals, their bacchanalian songs and ballads of love. Even the Puritans, who could not smile among their fellows, knew what it was to rollick and revel in ecstasy, in the imagination which carried them beyond the world.

It is the fashion to bewail the enormous overwork to which men are subjected in modern society. There seems to be an impression that an excessive strain of labor is breaking down the general health. That there is some truth in this is probable, but it must be exaggerated. That the demands of work are severe and perpetual, no one will deny. That work is frequently exhausting, all know; that health of body and mind is impaired by incessant exercise of muscle

and brain; that nervous diseases are more prevalent than they used to be, and may be largely ascribed to excess of toil, the physicians assure us; that sensitive organizations, the organizations of women especially, give way under the stress of cerebral excitement, is altogether probable; facts here only confirm what reflection would lead us to expect. But, after all, is it so much toil, as the conditions of toil, the accompaniments of toil, the uninterrupted energy of toil, the unbroken routine, the unaltered monotony, the ceaseless unvaried beating on one string or one set of strings, the unrelieved anxiety, the unrelaxed pressure of responsibility, that prove more than the strongest constitution can endure? Can one work too hard, too intensely, too absorbingly, if he exercises *all* his powers, if he exerts himself *all over*, if action is balanced and corrected by the requisite reaction? The evil, in my judgment, is not that people work too hard, or too continually, but that they work too monotonously. They have nothing but toil, and toil of the same unvarying kind. It is all muscle, or all brain; all eye, or all ear; an exclusive, unbroken monotony of strain on some single faculty, or group of faculties. There are no alternations of labor, or if there are such, they are alternations of labor with labor, not of labor with play. The last suggestion is, that recreation is diversified toil; but diversified toil may fatigue the

will as much as monotonous toil does. Part of the toil must be amusement, an employment that brings delight, that costs no effort to take up, but rather requires effort to lay down. However exhausting to another, it must be refreshing to the man who would derive relief from it; to him it must be no toil, but diversion.

Labor is not a curse; but to have no relief from labor, is. The primeval curse was not the expulsion from an Eden of perpetual delight, but the shutting of its gates against even an occasional return. The teacher who slaves day after day, for forty weeks, at the drudgery of imparting rudiments, setting tasks, hearing recitations, correcting compositions, will not suffer if she can absolutely forget it all for a few hours, and let her animal spirits frolic in the fields that beguile her most easily of her care. But if, in addition to her teaching, she undertakes to keep house, and bring up children, and write for magazines, and carry on works of social reform, and propel fine ideas through the heavy medium of social ignorance and stupidity, the chances are that she will first become nothing but a huge, irritable brain, and then that she will cease to be a brain, will drop into melancholy, or topple over into insanity.

Even so vital and vascular a man as Louis Agassiz, living much in the open air, travelling, exploring the

most delightful realms of creation, a man of natural enthusiasm in his pursuits, of a joyous temperament, succumbed, in the fullness of his powers, to the unintermitted pressure of the toil he enjoyed. The harp of a thousand strings must make music with all the thousand. Only too common are the examples of men and women who are smitten with paralysis, or lapse into imbecility ere their work is done, simply because they will not obey this imperative law of alternation from labor to play.

How to employ leisure, is the problem we have to deal with. Everybody has leisure, more or less. Nobody works literally all the time. In every day there are vacant hours, that should be used to balance the occupied ones. How are they used? Sometimes in the stupor of sleep or of intoxication; sometimes in utter, emotionless indolence—lounging in easy-chairs, gossiping, smoking, drugging the finer sensibilities; sometimes in ruinous pleasures, that exhaust the nervous forces which labor demands for its purposes; in riotous banquetings; in suppers that make quiet sleep impossible, even during the very few hours they allow for it; in heated ball-rooms; in the unwholesome excitements of the midnight waltz; in the wasting extravagance of unprofitable talk. As a rule, leisure is employed in a way that unfits people for toil, instead of in a way that prepares them for it. It

drains off the few remaining drops of vital energy, instead of replenishing the fountains of life, or, if nothing else, saving the precious elixir which nature provides against her needs. The use people make of their leisure is, on the whole, more deleterious than the use they make of their working hours. The hours of toil are often the hours of relaxation. Work is the saviour, the builder-up of the shattered temple, the economiser of wasted tissue—while leisure is the subverter, the sapper and miner, the destroyer.

What shall be done with leisure? Rest, you say—the cry is for rest; rest from occupation, from care, from anxiety, from questioning, from doubt, from the hunger of the mind, from the endless pursuit of what cannot be reached, from turmoil, and battle, and ambition, from the greediness of passion, and the gnawing unrest of sin. Yes, the word rest is delicious; the thought of rest is sweet; the vision of rest is enchanting; the hope of rest alleviates and consoles. But what is rest? It is not sleep, for sleep is unconscious, and we must be conscious of the blessedness of unconsciousness, in order to enjoy it. It is not idleness, for idleness is ignoble. It is not vacancy, for vacancy is nothing. It is not alternation of work, for alternation of work is only variety of unrest. Rest is perfect reaction from energy; it is a state of complete, happy reception; it is conscious oblivion; it is the sense of

having no sensations; it is ecstasy without emotion; a dreamy delight; a fullness without pain. In rest, there is a sense of feeling without feeling, a sense of thought without thinking, of happiness without the dread lest something may happen. There is neither memory in it, nor hope; neither looking back, nor looking forward; neither regret, nor anticipation. It is simply fullness of bliss, without recollection of the separate elements of bliss. We have a hint of it in the delicious state between waking and sleeping, when we are content to enjoy the absence of positive sensation, in the presence of the fact that all is so well we would be glad to have it last, undisturbed, forever; a state between yesterday, to-day, and to-morrow; a phantom state, during which the soft shadows of things before and things behind, glide across the mind, never startling by their footfall, as they troop through the world of illusion. We feel it sometimes in the presence of one wholly trusted and entirely beloved, to whom we are not moved to say anything, whom we do not care to hear speak, whose atmosphere alone bathes the mind in peace. Such a blissful condition is felt rarely, and is of brief duration. To the most it is so unknown and so hopeless, that they associate it with heaven, and dream of it as coming only when life is done.

They who can rest are the happiest; for rest is the

perfect recreator. It is inaction, and it is joy—a complete experience of both. But rest cannot be commanded, and, in default of it, what is there but amusement, that diverts without misleading, dissipates without corrupting, entertains without exhausting: that is pleasure without nervous waste, and delight without delirium; a cup that cheers, but does not inebriate. Its office is to recreate by indirection, to fill leisure with innocent gayety. That is the best amusement that most thoroughly amuses; not that instructs, elevates, purifies, but entertains, making, while it does so, the least possible draught on the mind feelings or will. It has no philosophy; it has no ethics; it has no intention, except to spread a genial happiness over the system. It is not in its nature to hurt any living creature; it is against its being to be savage, cruel, or harsh towards a living thing -man, beast, or insect. It bears no malice; it has no bitterness in its heart; it carries no venom beneath its tongue; it aims no shafts at goodness or worth; its laughter is harmless, its wit sunny, its humor generous. It is child of light and laughter. Impurity, indecency, indelicacy, it holds in aversion. It promotes good will, disarms evil temper, dispels rancor, exorcises fear, and puts the mind in sweet relation with the world of fortune and mankind.

This is a high office, and one not easily discharged.

It is not pretended that any existing amusements fully meet the requirements. They do not; they come very far short of it. In view of the gracious function it should perform, modern amusement is even less satisfactory than are most unsatisfactory institutions. It understands its mission less; indeed, it cannot be said to understand its mission at all. If it thinks of a mission, it thinks wildly and foolishly, complaining that it cannot do what it would, at the very moment it is unwittingly doing its best, and pluming itself on its grand achievement, when it has hit most widely of its mark. Often what is called an amusement is none, and as often what is despised as a low kind of amusement, is perfect for its purpose.

Let us look at one or two so-called amusements in this light. We shall find them to be remnants of old traditions, poorly adapted to modern needs—well enough suited to men in very different states of society, but poorly calculated for ours. We will not speak of the coarse amusements of brutal people, for they never recreate, but only dissipate and exhaust. We need not say much of the fine delights of the cultivated, which are beyond the range of our theme. Music is too subtle an excitement to be called amusing. It is the recreation of highly strung, sensitive natures whom a delicate aroma exhilarates. The opera is hardly to be classed among amusements. It is the

elegant recreation of a cultivated class, an artificial product of artificial society. It was first introduced at a royal nuptials in Italy. A court cardinal, priest and prince, domesticated it in Paris. A monarch established its reign there; and from the beginning till now it has been associated with rank, luxury, and aristocratic taste. Formerly, none were admitted who had not on the wedding garment, and still the rule holds to a considerable extent in Europe. The opera is aristocratic. Its romantic subjects remove it far as possible from popular interest. A combination of vocal and instrumental music with drama, a blending of the costliest arts, a result of genius in several departments, involving vast labor and training, and large expense, it is as much out of the reach of the popular cultivation as of the popular purse. It presupposes in those who enjoy it, imagination, sentiment, love of music, refinement of taste, and the power of entering into unreal situations. It is a diversion for easy and luxurious minds. For the overworked, the mentally oppressed, the careworn, dejected, unprivileged, miserable, it has little charm, for it demands too much, and gives too little. Its graceful attractions are insufficient to draw people away from themselves. Its pathos is affected; its mirth is light. It will cause a ripple on the surface of placid minds, but rarely it stirs the depths of the heart. The opera

is not popular, and never will be. Even were it less exclusive and less expensive, it would never meet the common want. It is not vital and vascular enough to take hold of every-day sympathies; there is too little fun in it. At most it excites a titillation of mirth; hearty, side-shaking, heart-healing laughter it is forbidden, by its very nature, to provoke. A perfect finish and decoration to polished society, it must be left out of account in a list of popular recreations.

The theatre is better. That is truly popular. If its origin was not with the people, its home has always been among them. The humblest and rudest take delight in it; the intelligent go to it with pleasure. Its capacities are so vast and varied, its resources so rich, its range of interests is so wide, its form so pliable, that it will meet any exigency. It comes home to human experience in a hundred ways; the world of tears and the world of laughter are both open to it. It will take on the most exquisite adornment, and in the simplest form it is attractive. There is room in it for talent of every kind and degree, and, with no surprising talent, it performs well its genial office. The theatre alone, if its capabilities were all developed, its advantages all improved, and its accessories all called in, would provide recreation for all that required it. From the private theatricals to the heroic drama, from the broad farce to the classic tragedy, what a range of effects is possible!

But the theatre with us is not what it should be. It is an imported luxury, and smacks of foreign soil. It is English or French, not American. If English, it reflects forms of social life, customs, usages, sentiments, with which our people are not familiar, often the sentiments of an age happily passed by; if French, it reflects a form of society, customs, usages, sentiments, with which we devoutly hope Americans never may become familiar—the social forms of a people whose moral instincts are as unrefined as their taste in externals is faultless; whose pleasures are passionate, whose entertainments must be so highly seasoned as to disgust fastidious palates, whose public amusements have a vein of indecency running through them which no sentimentality or elegance can conceal. And this is the reason why adaptations of French plays to the American stage have but a partial and doubtful success. The sincerity of our people is displeased by the artificial sentiment, the tinsel emotion, the flimsy affectation of morality, the overwrought passion, the false situations, the exaggerated professions of feeling, the unhealthy interpretations of the problems of existence, the strained theories of duty, the subtle substitution of passion for principle in every important relation between human beings. No beauty, no grace, no elegance of attire, no sumptuousness of decoration, no elaborate finish of scenery, no

finesse of the actor's art, will make amends for the essential unfitness of an entertainment to the mental and moral condition of the people who are bidden to enjoy it. This adaptation is primary. In any large community there will be a few, a small public, sufficiently foreign in taste, morbid in feeling, intense and unbalanced in emotion, passionate in temperament, to demand plays like "Madeline Morel," "Alixe," "The Baroness," "La Femme du Feu," but the great mass of the community are simply offended by them, and forsake them. The opera-bouffe would be a perfect amusement, but for the omnipresent vileness of the libretto. The vivacity, the brilliancy, the change, the springiness of the music, the grace of the ballet, the exquisite nonsense, the wild rollicking gayety, combine to fascinate the simple and please the cultivated; but the undercurrent of coarseness spoils it all. It may not outrage uncultivated Parisians. Of course it does not, for it is a child of Paris; but it only adds another anxiety to thoughtful Americans. It is no amusement for us, nor would it be, if it were made accessible to the thinnest purse, and rendered in a speech that all could understand. Americans can be amused by nothing that is loose or licentious.

I claim no higher function for the theatre than to amuse. As the world goes, that is a function high enough for a reasonable ambition. They who speak

of the theatre as a great moral power in society, who dwell enthusiastically on its deep responsibilities, and urge fidelity to them on all players and managers, who assert that the theatre should do its part, along with the pulpit, to instruct and improve mankind, to set forth just views of human life, hold up noble ideals of excellence, exhibit beautiful models of character; they who claim that the stage should be a school of culture in art, and of education in philosophy, probably exaggerate its importance. I am willing to rest its claims to support simply on its power to amuse, healthily and sweetly, by feeding the desire for mental delight, by opening the fountains of mirth, touching the springs of humor, awakening the dormant, latent, crushed, overlaid, or down-trodden capacities for innocent enjoyment, by presenting to each class of people the special kind of illusion, the particular dream-land or fairy-land, where they can lose the poignant sense of care in the contemplation of such an ideal world as is above them and not too remote. Let it be granted that it is not the actor's business to philosophize or to preach, to expound social theories, or defend popular causes, to take sides in political or religious controversies, but simply to amuse in a way to counteract the pressure or strain of ordinary existence; let it be conceded that he is not a censor or a prophet, but a minister of recreation;

that whether his department be tragedy or comedy, the stately drama of Shakespeare or the wild antics of the buffoon, he is to fascinate and beguile world-worn people of their sorrow ; still, on this interpretation, which some will esteem a very mean one, he must consult the moral condition and needs of the people he would entertain.

We will not demand of managers that they shall undertake what, from the nature of things, they cannot perform. Theirs is a profession, and, like all professions, has limits that cannot be overpassed. They must meet the public demand. If they attempt to furnish what the public do not demand, they will have no public. They must consult the popular taste, otherwise they will not only lose money, but will fail to make an impression on the common mind. They will neither instruct nor entertain. The stage reflects the public, or should aim to. In states where the theatres were under control and patronage of the government, they could be made instruments for representing such forms of institution and character as the government wished to encourage. But here, where the people support the theatre, they will pay only for what they enjoy ; and the providers of enjoyment must consult their wishes. This is understood. But there are worthy and unworthy ways of doing this. There are gross wishes and pure wishes,

demands of appetite and demands of taste, demands of passion and demands of sentiment; if the public must be taken as they are, they can at all events be taken at their best, and a severe reprimand should be visited on those who take them at their worst. The duty of entertaining is quite as serious, in its way, as the duty of instructing, and must be held to as strict an accountability. The public can no better afford to be debauched in their play, than misled in their study, or cajoled in their worship.

Complaints of the decline of the drama do not affect us seriously. The neglect of the heroic drama is a necessity, for the heroic element in modern life no longer struts on a stage, declaiming pompous platitudes, but hides modestly away in the dwellings of humble people. The days of the stately tragedy are numbered, for life is already tragic enough; the overwrought people would rather laugh than cry. Hamlet and Othello move through scenes of gorgeous spectacular beauty which enchant the eye, and prevent the sadness their fate would produce. Romeo and Juliet suffer and die amid splendors that divert the mind from their woes. All this is merely an accommodation to modern times and people, of the drama of a past age; not a decline, but a readjustment. The lords and gentry of England in the time of Queen Elizabeth could afford to be diverted by scenes of ter-

ror and tales of woe, but we cannot afford it; and only an exquisite artifice that will satisfy cultivated minds, only a refinement of beauty that will give delight to those that do not care to be amused, justifies the representation of plays that sadden more than they refresh.

From what has been said, it may be inferred that the condition of our public amusements is far from being satisfactory. They are not often objectionable in morals. They are seldom reprehensible in taste. Their general tendency is to greater refinement. Undoubtedly they supply, in a measure, the wants of a great many people. Many a burden of care is nightly thrown off, many a pent-up heart is nightly relieved, many a spell of despondency is nightly broken, many a sunless bosom is nightly cheered, many a pestilent accumulation of vapors is nightly dissipated by the merry songs, the pleasing pantomime, the droll burlesque, the harmless fun, the graceful comedy, the scenic enchantment, that are offered by the numerous places of entertainment in the metropolis. There are actors and managers—I will not name them here—who are public benefactors, and richly earn the plaudits and the gifts they receive; for they are instrumental in rescuing hundreds of people from the depths of gloom and misanthropy. Adam Smith accounted for the fame that singers and players enjoy, and for the

prices that are paid for their services, by suggesting that in this way the public would make amends for the contempt in which their professions are held. It may more fairly be explained by the gratitude the world feels to those who furnish it with harmless recreation.

Our chief complaint is that the supply of amusement is totally inadequate to the demand, and fails to meet the demand that is most urgent. It is the luxury of the few, not the food of the multitude. It is the indulgence of those who can afford it, rather than the daily bread of those that require it. They that *need* amusement are the toil-worn and anxious, the wretched and the tempted. Consider the life of the masses of the people, the unenlightened, undeveloped, unpriviliged; the monotony of it, the cheerlessness of it. Consider their poverty, their disability, their darkness and deprivation, the meanness of their homes, the joylessness of their domestic and social relations, the settling down on them of sadness and gloom. Consider how this gloom deepens into bitterness, into envy, jealousy, rancor, and hate; how distrust of Providence, defiance of law, sullen discontent with things as they are, settled antagonism of feeling towards the constitution of society, creep in and take possession of the mind. Consider the disposition to brood over miseries till they seem to be

wrongs, and to plot against the comfortable classes, that perpetual acquaintance with pain engenders; the fierce anger of the exasperated toilers, that takes form in Communism and finds expression in the menace of the "Internationale."

Consider how unrelieved monotony, ungladdened deprivation, lead to vicious indulgence at the gin-shop, the bar, the brothel, as the only refuge from misery. Wonder who will at the intemperance of the "lower classes," as they are called; I wonder that there is no more. When a man can escape from the cold prison-house of a weary life, from the sense of want, the thought of mother or wife pining, of children suffering, of work unpaid for, a past full of disappointment, a future full of fear—can escape from all this, in a moment, at the cost of a few pennies, by taking the tempting glass, it is but natural that he should do it. It is cheap delirium. They have little right to blame the drunkard, whose fortunate lot makes their own ecstasy more harmless.

The intelligent members of society have a grave responsibility laid upon them in this matter. Under different institutions the state is called on to provide recreations for the people. With us that may not be done. The people must provide recreation for themselves, in their own time and manner, as they may, with such help as they can obtain. But much may

be done by encouraging them to do it; by making amusement reputable; by associating pleasure with health and sanity; by offering all practicable facilities for cheap, public games, out-of-door recreations, indoor shows, farces, merrymakings, dramatic exhibitions.

When Napoleon, in Egypt, heard that the populace of Paris were disposed to insurrection, he sent word to amuse them. "Gild the dome of the Invalides." We should not wait till the populace become insurgent. We should not throw pleasure to them as a sop to divert their famishing minds. But for their personal satisfaction and relief, as well as for the general order and happiness, we should rejoice in their participation in the gladness that renews all human existence, rescuing labor from its curse, and taking from misery its sting.

WHY GO TO CHURCH?

A

SERMON

BY

O. B. FROTHINGHAM,

PREACHED IN

LYRIC HALL,

SIXTH AVENUE, BETWEEN FORTY FIRST AND FORTY-SECOND STS.,

February 8th, 1874.

NEW YORK:
D. G. FRANCIS, 17 ASTOR PLACE

1874.

BOOKS BY

OCTAVIUS B. FROTHINGHAM.

THE RELIGION OF HUMANITY.

AN ESSAY,

SECOND EDITION,

Revised, with Fine Steel Portrait of Author.

Price, $1.50.

CHILD'S BOOK OF RELIGION,

FOR SUNDAY-SCHOOLS AND HOMES.

Price, $1.00.

STORIES FROM THE LIPS OF THE TEACHER

RE-TOLD BY A DISCIPLE.

With Illustrations. Cloth, $1.00.

"Mr. Frothingham has given to this work the inexpressible charm of his own vivid imagination and affluent and graphic style, in rendering these most beautiful and deep apologues of the Divine Master, and attempting to make the New Testament a more living book to the young people of this day."—*Salem Register.*

STORIES OF THE PATRIARCHS,

UNIFORM WITH THE PRECEDING.

Price, $1.00.

"A work of culture and taste: it will be welcome to all ages, and gives the sublimest lessons of manhood in the simple language of a child."—*Springfield Republican.*

THE BELIEFS OF THE UNBELIEVERS,

A LECTURE READ IN BOSTON, JAN. 8, 1871.

Price, 20 cents.

DAVID G. FRANCIS,

17 ASTOR PLACE, NEW YORK.

WHY GO TO CHURCH?

I propose to discuss the claims of our Sunday services on intelligent people who are outside of the sects. That the discussion may have interest and point, let us begin it by putting and meeting the plain question: Why should such people attend them? Why go to Church? To technical Christians such a question would have no meaning, would be pertinent to nothing. Why go to church! the Catholic would say. Because the Church is the ordained means of salvation; a divine institution, planted and inspired in order that human beings may be rescued from the "Prince of the World" and brought into the household of God. Going to church is entering the gate to heaven. Who would not go? Who but reckless, abandoned people refuse or neglect to go? The altar of sacrifice, the blessed sacraments, the rites and ordinances filled with healing virtue, the priests endowed with reconciling powers, are altogether a gracious arrangement devised by Heaven for the benefit of fallen man, which none but fools will turn away

from. Why go to church! exclaims the Protestant. Because it is the place where the gospel is preached to sinful, dying men; the gospel of redemption; the only gospel by which we are saved. "Whosoever shall call on the name of the Lord shall be saved. But how shall they call on him in whom they have not believed? and how shall they believe in him of whom they have not heard? and how shall they hear without a preacher?" So it is written: To support the preaching of the gospel is a duty laid down in the Bible, which we dare not neglect if we would. It is not for us to pass judgment on the gospel, but to welcome it. The message is for our benefit; the terms of acceptance are simple. It better becomes beneficiaries such as we are to take gratefully what is offered them, than to turn sulkily away because the boon might have been presented in a shape more attractive to their carnal reason. To those who reason thus I have nothing here to say.

But the people whom I have in mind reason differently. If they go to church it is because it is the custom, or because it is social, or because they see their friends there, or because the preacher is eloquent, or because they find a commercial interest in it, or, perhaps, because they have nothing better to do. It is easier for them to tell why they do not go. They do not go because the Church

is to them a human institution like any other, which is good to them that find it useful; because the preaching of the gospel is not, in their view, necessary to salvation; because they discredit the gospel itself; because the question of salvation in another world, from flames of hell, does not interest them; because they do not believe in future perdition, perhaps do not believe in any future after death; because what is called religion has dropped out of their list of practical concerns. The ceremonies seem to them idle; the sermons dull; the devotional exercises unmeaning. The priest has but the ghost of a function; the preacher but the shadow of an authority; the pastor but the tradition of an office. With sacraments and a creed, the Church, they say, stands for something to those who revere the sacrament and accept the creed; but to those who do neither it is a simulacrum, a spectre, a ghost of things departed, the reminiscence of a tradition.

This is the state of mind I would address; not with remonstrance, certainly, or rebuke, or pleading, or appeal, but with a quiet statement of reasons in justification of the religious service we continue.

The aim of our religious service, let me say in a word, is to stimulate the mind and move the feelings in the direction of ideal—that is, of intellectual as distinguished from sensible things. It is a means

of culture; its function is that of art; it belongs to those agencies by which men and women are refined in sentiment and desire. For this purpose it employs means which immemorial usage has adopted, and universal experience has decided to be best adapted to the object in view.

The first is music. Religion in every age of mankind, among all races of mankind, has employed music as a means of expressing and arousing emotion; and for very good reasons: music is the full voice of the human cry in its every mood and modulation; the cry of penitence, sadness, bitterness, complaint; the cry of longing, aspiration, petition; the cry of thanksgiving, praise, joy; the cry for pardon, the cry for rest. It voices them all, and voices them perfectly: for it commands all instruments; it touches all keys; it has control of all styles of composition. Music, moreover, not being concerned with relations between local, accidental, or visible objects, not being associated with living forms, but being incorporeal, as it were, is completely adapted to express floating sentiments, bodiless, dreamy emotions, unlimited desires, hopes and aspirations that reach out into boundless spheres, the airy, nameless feelings which we call spiritual. It is this peculiarity that makes music a universal voice, of no tribe or sect, simply human. Hence religion, which also is uni-

versal and human, has adopted it, and has done more for its development as an art than everything else has done. Religion has called into existence the noblest of instruments, the organ, and has created the grandest of compositions, the mass, the oratorio, the symphony. There have been times when religion almost monopolized music, and there have been epochs of history when music was more effectual than any other means in rousing the religious sense. The Romish Church is as eminent for its musical as for its architectural creations. Its masters in composition are famous over the world for their expressive harmonies. The Protestant faith, through its immortal artists, beginning with Bach and Handel, has laid the modern mind under a spell of music more powerful than its strange spell of doctrine. Luther's songs were as potent as his sermons. In fact, it is difficult to think of religion without music, as it is difficult to think of music wholly apart from some phase of religion. For this reason we also cultivate music: the music of the organ and the trained choir; not begrudging its cost, but wishing we could afford to make it nobler than it is: more rich, various, and pure, more worthy of its beautiful office of expressing and stimulating the finest human feeling. In the religious services of the future music will hold the same place it has held in the past; its expression will change

as the new faith becomes clear and articulate; it will utter new emotions; it will touch new chords; it will catch the glow of a new spirit; but its office will be no less prominent, and its influence no less mighty on the heart.

Another means of performing our task is the reading of Scriptures, which contain the antique wisdom of the race; not the Hebrew and Christian Scriptures only, but the Scriptures of old Asia, India, Egypt, China, of Persian sages and Greek bards, whose voices utter the solemn convictions of their ages and peoples. Time has sanctified these deep words; centuries have polished and set them; they are round and smooth as stones which the eternal ocean has wrought into perfect shapes on the sandy beaches. Sentences as wise and weighty might be collected from living writers: from Shakespeare, Bacon, Goethe, Emerson; but the best of these are chaste and venerable; all associations with personal weakness, with infirmities of character and accidents of fortune have been rubbed out; they bear no private mark of individual, of age, or of nation, but are interchangeable all over the world. To read them calls up the thinking, feeling, hoping, suffering, aspiring generations, gives a strong background to our trembling thought, fortifies with the attestation of departed centuries the attemp s we make to steady our minds amid the currents of speculation and emotion.

A third agency we employ is prayer. This also is universal and of universal significance. There is no religion without prayer. Religion without prayer is inconceivable. To prayer we restore its original meaning; for prayer is the heart's desire for unattained, and by ordinary means unattainable good; it is hunger and thirst for divine things. Of course no one is to suppose that we employ it as religious people in general do—as a means of propitiating higher powers, of obtaining favors from a divine being, of establishing private relations with a patron deity—no such thought enters our mind. We offer no petition; we supplicate for no boon, not even a spiritual one; we address ourselves to no person who dwells in another sphere, and we expect nothing in return for our act, not so much as an etherial influence shed upon our minds. The desire is its own satisfaction, the petition its own answer.

Prayer, with us, is the breathing forth of an emotion of longing for heavenly gifts. It is a conscious entertainment of such longing; a declaration of it when it exists; an uttered wish for it when it does not exist. It is a deliberate effort to call up and hold in view, for an instant, as supremely desirable and beautiful, qualities of goodness, nobility, purity, loveliness, which are remote from our daily experience; which we do not possess—doubt, perhaps, whether

we ever shall possess—despair, possibly, of ever possessing; can only dream of, admire, long for; but which, nevertheless, seem to us sweetly and gloriously human—the mere occasional thought whereof gladdens, elevates, and consoles.

Certainly there is nothing approaching superstition in this. The act may be genuine and sincere—as much so as the admiration of ideal characters, as the study of perfect forms in art. There is nothing fanciful in it, nothing empty or idle. It has a use, and a real one—may I not say an important one? For, surely it is important that people should keep before them, as objects of supreme and even passionate desire, the best they know, feel, or can think of; and should, by conscious preparation and endeavor, lift themselves up to its presence.

The object of our public prayer is to do for a number of people what each one should do for himself, but which few, probably, are in the habit of doing. It was wittily said of a divine of the last generation, who had remarkable gifts in this exercise, that his prayers were the most eloquent that were ever addressed to a Boston congregation. This was meant in satire, but it might have been accepted as praise. For the prayer, as a spoken address, is in very simple truth designed to take effect on the congregation, and has no reference to any person outside of it. Its in-

tention is to lift as many as possible, as many as may be susceptible, into a region of pure, holy, serene thought; to detain them there for a few moments; to make the vision of divine things so vivid and fascinating that they will long to possess them; will receive on their hearts a fresh impression of their beauty; will peradventure be induced to cultivate and make them their own. That this is often successfully done, that it is ever perfectly done, that it is ever done for more than a small portion of any congregation, may be doubted. But that is not a good reason why it should not be attempted; why the few who can enter into it fully should not have the opportunity; why the opportunity should not be given to others, who may feel the power of it if they never have yet. I know that some, perhaps many, would miss it were it omitted. I believe that the omission of it would be generally felt to be of a kind that let down the whole exercise of the Sunday; took the glory, the poetic beauty and glow from it, and left only prosaic elements. With it the spiritual—by which I mean the finest intellectual feature of it—would depart. The exercise may be very inadequately performed; but even so, it is better than if it were not performed at all.

To come now to the sermon: The general aim of this is precisely the same as of the other parts; that

is to say, it is the transport of minds to higher regions of thought. But here the agency is directly intellectual. The sermon is addressed, not to the emotions or sentiments, but to the understanding. Your preacher does not claim to be a scientific instructor, or a master in speculative philosophy. He does not, like the Romish priest or the Protestant divine, arrogate a special inspiration by virtue of ordination or consecration through the imposition of hands. He is the apostle of no revelation, he announces no gospel of redemption, he brings no message of deliverance. He asserts for himself no divine commission, he asks for his word no authority, he affects to possess no peculiar knowledge or wisdom above other men, he puts on no airs of superiority by virtue of his position. He concedes to the editor, the lecturer, the platform speaker, the scientific professor his utmost of due. The only office he claims to discharge is that of stimulator of the higher intellect. He is the priest of ideas, the minister of intelligence, the mouth-piece of immaterial mind. The sole title to respect or consideration is his fidelity in discharging this fine function—the right to discharge which is forfeited by theological dogmatism, as well as by an undue interest in other matters that are out of his sphere.

To him it seems that there are subjects which people cannot afford to forget; which they need to hold

in earnest remembrance, and require to have presented to them statedly, for the reason that their ordinary daily life tends to keep them out of mind. Modern existence has to be to such an extent devoted to business, politics, society, that the aspects which are not palpably visible are concealed, and the very worth of them is doubted. Material uses make such demand on the intellect that no other uses are thought of. The intellect comes to be regarded as an instrument of material uses, and its ideal faculties of reflection, contemplation, meditation, insight into truth, fall into neglect and are discredited.

The subjects I allude to are not theological, not technically Christian, not professional in the usual sense. I have not in mind Trinity, deity of Christ, atonement, man fallen and redeemed, the misery of the present or the felicity of the future state. I am not thinking of the articles of faith in their attenuated form; not of the sanctity of the Scriptures, the character of Jesus, the excellences of Christianity, the importance of minding the soul's concerns, the mystery and awfulness of the life immortal. My thought is fixed on themes of more universal interest, that should be engaging to people who have detached themselves from personal associations with all organized and instituted faith. The purely human relations which men sustain to each other by virtue of

their human nature, the qualities implied in these relations, the duties comprised in them, the social changes they involve, the ties they weave, the responsibilities they impose, are matters with which it is his province to deal. The capacities and possibilities of man, the reach of his hopes, the range of his desires, the worth of his attributes, the weight of his will, the conditions of his expansion and elevation, come within the scope of his treatment. The significance of the ancient words God, Immortality, Life, Death, it is for him to measure and announce. All that is conveyed in the terms worship, adoration, reverence, piety—terms as old as humanity, and as new as the last-coined phrase—he makes it his duty to estimate. Man's effort to perfect himself, the longing of the finite mind to communicate with the Infinite mind, with the hundred matters of interest that follow from it—this concerns him primarily, as it concerns also every reflecting person. Topics like these do not fall within the consideration of other teachers. The man of science has nothing to do with them; the philosopher deals with them abstractly. The man of letters avoids them as unsuited to his ends; the journalist is occupied with problems of less permanent interest. It is the preacher's office to bring them directly before the people as questions of vital concernment; to illustrate their import, and apply their lessons to the needs and occupations of the hour.

Does any one say that such questions as these have had their day? that their significance has left them? that they are merely relics of by-gone, obsolete speculation, curious enough to the antiquarians of opinion, but mere time and brain wasters for the people of to-day? To such it must be replied that, in point of fact, they still exercise a vast sway over human kind; occupy thoughts to a wonderful extent; and are to most people the most fascinating and absorbing questions presented to them. The misfortune is, that they dwell most on them who are the least able to grapple with them. Ignorance and credulity make them the covert of their superstitions; while intelligence, disgusted, avoids them and turns away to matters of more pressing material moment. But it is here, precisely, that the power of intelligence needs to be felt. It is nothing less than a shame that subjects which are really of most deep import to the bright and active-minded should be given over to the irrational. Can we afford to live thoughtless of the capacities and relations which remove us furthest from the lower orders of creatures, and alone dignify and exalt our humanity? If what is called science had gone so far as to refute all beliefs respecting a spiritual nature in man, there would still remain considerations touching his higher personal and social culture, that cannot be overlooked. Sweep the theological conception of man

away—you still have left the rational conception, which is exceedingly noble, and may well employ the noblest minds in its contemplation. Drop as vain and unprofitable speculation, the notion of personal relation between a man and the infinite God. The notion of a personal relation between a man and the other members of his kind, above him and below him, is neither vain nor unprofitable. It is most intensely real, and cannot be lost from view without great harm to the whole mental and moral being.

And while the preacher has themes that may be regarded as peculiarly his own—seeing that their discussion devolves on him as on no others—he also has a method of approaching truth which, though by no means exclusively his own, is characteristic of him as a teacher; and this method consists in approaching subjects from within and above—say, rather, from the centre—in distinction from those who approach them from the circumference. Let me try to explain clearly what I mean: Ours is called a scientific age, an age of fact, as opposed to a speculative age—an age of fancy. Give us facts, is the cry—things as they are. But what are facts by themselves—separate, disjoined, unrelated, unarranged by thought? Make the most generous collection of them, taken from all departments of matter and of mind—facts visible and invisible, material and immaterial, facts of sense and

facts of feeling, facts of chemistry and facts of consciousness, facts of physics and facts of metaphysics—there they are, an uninstructive, unsuggestive heap until thought touches them. But what thought is it that touches them most finely, interprets them most wisely, marshals them most symmetrically?

There are two ways of setting facts so as to make a mosaic of them that shall tell a story. The first is to range them side by side, without definite plan to start with, feeling the way along, as it were, to their natural combinations, and trusting that in time, when enough of them have been collected, an intelligible and harmonious piece of work will appear. The other is to begin with a plan, or at least with an idea, which is but another word for a plan, and set or arrange the facts according to it. The first is the slow, literal, mechanical way of science; the second is the swift, intellectual way of poetry. Science assumes nothing to begin with, but observes facts as they appear, one by one, grouping them as it goes along, and making statements about them that cover the groups. Poetry assumes to begin with certain ideas of order, beauty, harmony, certain principles as they are called, certain laws as they are called again, and, with these in mind, comes down on the facts with an explanation, and makes them dance to its music. This latter method prevailed for many hundreds of

years, to the exclusion of the other, and the effect of it was very strange indeed. For these ideas, as they were termed, were often baseless, fanciful, chimerical, the product of dreamy or crochetty minds, and the wild sport they made of facts is a very curious thing to contemplate; they were shuffled and transfigured in a remarkable manner, and were made to represent figures which were the astonishment of observers. At present the other method is popular. There is a grave distrust of theories, as they are contemptuously called, a severe dislike of assumptions of every kind. The mere word "insight" is dreaded; and people who talk about laws and principles are shunned by the devotees of knowledge.

Yet nothing is truer than that neither of these methods is sufficient without the other. In the attempt to arrive at truth, deduction is as important as induction; the interpretation of facts by the light of principles is as useful as the observation of facts by careful scrutiny. Some of the most remarkable discoveries in experimental science, astronomy, chemistry, botany, have been due to this method purely, as everybody knows who has read the story of Newton's superb generalization respecting the law of attraction, or Hauy's exquisite discovery of the law of crystals, or Goethe's marvellous glance into the transformation of plants; and if space permitted

me here to tell one of these beautiful stories, or any one of the many stories of a similar kind which are found in the records of science, I could persuade you that this power of insight, this power to draw swift inferences, to dart lightning glances into the secrets of things, to leap, as it were, with steps light as gossamer, along the unseen paths of the creative mind, to detect clues by the sympathetic appreciation of the forefeeling reason, had played no mean part in the history of discovery. And I think you would be persuaded that this faculty had no mean part yet to play. Exclude ideas, sentiments, intuitions, prophecies of the imagination, the previsions of faith, from the domain of truth, and you leave the domain desolate indeed. The effect would be the same as if you were to exclude poetry from literature, or were to reduce art to the function of map-drawing and chart-making. You would simply take the glory, yes the inspiration out of the world, and with the glory and inspiration the impulse and the joy of movement, the charm of progress, the spring of hope, the winged bound of enthusiasm.

Now this method of the poet, which accomplishes such beautiful results, which achieves such wonderful triumphs of discovery, which illumines so finely the obscure regions where knowledge has neither eyes to see nor feet to tread; this method of intuition, of in-

sight, is also that of the preacher and teacher of religion. He follows the poetic laws; he is in his way a poet, not in the sense of being a maker of verses, but in the sense of being a seer, an interpreter, a discerner of subtle analogies, a "reader between the lines," of the divine manuscript of being. He starts with a few primary assumptions or first principles, faith in order, law, harmony, beauty, faith in causes, in the persistency and purpose and final intentions of things, faith in the eternal wisdom and goodness, faith in creative, ruling and presiding love; and these leading assumptions he brings to bear and applies on all occasions and to all subjects whatsoever; doing his best to justify his faith to himself and others, and to show how, in accordance with it, the facts of existence become intelligible.

That he does this successfully, in all cases or any case, is not the question; that he does it with any distinguished ability or skill, is not the question. All preachers and teachers of religion are not great, brilliant or successful; very few are; all poets are not successful, great, or brilliant; very few are. But all preachers and teachers of religion have this office, and try to discharge it, in most cases, with such talent and conscience as is given them. They are usually men who, by the constitution of their minds, are predestined to this calling. Their special studies prepare

them for it; the companionship of books, the familiarity with great minds, the commerce with high thoughts, the intercourse with natures of genius like their own, the admiring love of the noblest examples of humanity, all conspire to aid them. They lead quiet, secluded lives, free from the struggles and ambitions of men; in an ideal world, breathing the serene atmosphere of thought. Ungifted, as artists and poets commonly are, as men of business, unskilled in the detail of practical affairs—worthless, if you please, for material uses, out of place in the counting-room or the political arena, they are all the better qualified for the discharge of their office as earnest contemplators of the silent principles which preside over human affairs; the laws of justice, the sanctions of truth, the obligations of duty, the demands of love, which even the money-market is bound at last to obey. The success of these men, not their apparent success, perhaps, but their real success, depends on the faithfulness with which they perform this delicate function. If they are not faithful to it, or perform it so badly that their fidelity can in no wise make up for their incapacity, they have no right to a hearing from their fellow-men; it is to the credit of their fellow-men that no hearing is given them, as it is a credit to people not to buy bad pictures or to read poor poems. Their oracles ought to be deserted,

But if they perform their function creditably as well as faithfully, they surely have a claim on the sympathetic attention of thoughtful people. Their office is a legitimate one. Were it abandoned, the community would suffer in its most sensitive part; a check would be given to the higher culture of humanity which it would be impossible, perhaps, to recover from.

I have dwelt so long on this peculiarity of the preacher's function that I have allowed hardly space enough to mention one other feature of his office that should recommend it to people having at heart the nobler welfare of society. As idealists, as believers in unrelated laws and principles, such as I have described them; as worshippers of pure truth, beauty, and goodness, they cherish splendid visions of future society, and cause them to float constantly before the imaginations of men, kindling their desire, exciting their enthusiasm, and leading them on by hope and aspiration to better and better states. They thus become instigators to noble reforms as well as foreshadowers of them, showing to the toiling pilgrims the New Jerusalem sparkling at a distance across the hot sands, and at the same time beguiling them of the terrible weariness of the way.

This service the Hebrew prophets rendered to their nation, holding up before them, in days of dis-

aster, the image of the coming Messiah; picturing the felicity that would be theirs when they should obey the pure law that had been given to them; should forsake idolatry; should do justly, and love mercy, and walk humbly; should respect one another; should care for the poor and needy, and comfort the afflicted souls, and set their slaves at liberty, and deal honestly with their neighbors, and study peace with all men, and practise the precepts of brotherly-kindness which the Lord had made. By doing this the prophets acquired an immense power over their generations—kept them up in the hardest periods of their history, carried them through the worst passages of their experience, increased their independence, steadied their conscience, refined their feelings, softened their hearts, widened their sympathies; educated them in social wisdom and duty, successfully counteracted the influence of kingly and priestly institutions, and kept the national mind active, fluent, and progressive. Their Messiah was a dream, but it was a splendid one. Their New Jerusalem always stayed in the clouds, never came down; their regenerated earth never appeared; their happy human state kept receding before them; but the vision answered its purpose; the heavenly city had foundations in faith; in hope the regenerated earth did exist: and the deathless principles of human

kindness still predicted that the perfect human condition would be obtained.

Jesus made vivid and beautiful to his contemporaries the vision of the kingdom of heaven, and laid down the ethics of the Millennium in the Sermon on the Mount; so splendidly he did both, that the vision, even yet, at the distance of nearly two thousand years, inspires and gladdens multitudes of sad-hearted, despairing people; the ethics of the Millennium are read reveringly, in faith, by millions who never think of living up to them, could not live up to them to save their lives, but who, in their heart of hearts, believe that they express profoundest truths.

It is often objected to the Sunday preachers that they are dreamers—that they hope too much, believe too passionately, trust too absolutely, have a wild, fantastical faith in human nature, are flighty enthusiasts for abstract principles, are good architects of castles in the air, not of human dwellings. It is probably true, and is it not to their credit that it should be true? Have not visions their place? Has not dreaming its uses? If the prophecy comes from nobleness, generosity, kindness, love; if it is the anticipation of the single heart, guileless, unselfish, true to its best intuition, is it not good to listen to it and take it home? Though in our time, and in time long subsequent to ours it may not be fulfilled, may

not faith in it hasten the time when it shall be fulfilled? May not the entertainment of it enable honest, plain people to promote the coming of such a time? Will they not be most likely to work for the Kingdom who believe in a Kingdom to be worked for? Will any toil less patiently at laying the long courses of stone, for having the architect's magnificent plan before them? There is abundant testimony to prove that the best practical work is done by those who cherish the highest aspirations.

Thus, in entire frankness, I state my view of the scope and object of our Sunday service. Not my estimate of what it is, but my conception of what it ought to be. That it is something very different from this, and very far short of it; so different and so far short that my conception is never illustrated completely, and often, in the majority of cases, possibly, cannot be recognized at all, is honestly though sorrowfully admitted. And I am more than willing to allow, I am anxious to think, that the prevalent indifference, may I not say the frequent contempt, of thoughtful, earnest people, is due to the failure of the Sunday service to be what it should be. Certainly no institution is spoken of with such familiar disrespect as the pulpit. The minister of religion is perpetually made to feel that he is an official held in very poor esteem; he hears his calling derided; he is himself often in-

sulted to the face by coarse-minded people, who assume that he knows himself the pretender they believe him to be. The Sunday service, as a whole, and in detail, is subjected to a supercilious criticism, the cardinal presumption whereof is, that it is only a relic of ancient usage, which lingers on in an age that has no need or use for it, and must, before many years, disappear entirely.

If I should undertake to decide by whose fault things have come to such a pass, I should have to open a long series of considerations which had better, for the present, be left untouched. My purpose in this discourse has been to show that such a state of things has come about through the fault of somebody, that it is an unfortunate and unnatural state of things that ought not to continue, and will not continue when the true state of things is understood: when they who have charge of the Sunday ministry of religion comply with the conditions of their office, and they who sustain them by their presence and sympathy entertain no false expectations, and make no unfair demands. But if the former allow themselves to be narrow and prejudiced and worldly, mistaking dogmatism for inspiration, and sectarian zeal for faith, and if the latter want an opera-singer in the choir, a rhapsodist at the altar, and a low comedian in the pulpit, it is very certain that the Sunday services will

fall into contempt, though it may be doubted whether they will fall into such deep contempt as they will deserve. That an institution so fine, of such noble compass and such grand possibility, should lose its significance and sink beyond recovery into the abyss of forgotten things, would be deplorable indeed. For one, I cannot believe that it will. For one, I have faith that a better day is coming, when higher ministries will be required and furnished; when the people shall cry for more than they get now, and ministers shall draw on living fountains for their supply.

SAINTLINESS.

A

SERMON

BY

O. B. FROTHINGHAM,

PREACHED IN

LYRIC HALL,

SIXTH AVENUE, BETWEEN FORTY-FIRST AND FORTY-SECOND STS.,

March 22d, 1874.

NEW YORK:
D. G. FRANCIS, 17 ASTOR PLACE

1874.

SAINTLINESS.

"Not my will, but Thine be done."

These are the words of a saint; they are the characteristic words of a saint; they express the idea of saintliness. When Jesus spoke them he was in the saintly mood; he was in the same mood when he stood silent before Pilate and said, "Thou couldest have no power at all over me except it were given thee from above." In the same mood he received the buffets of the soldiers who smote him and spit in his face. In the same mood he said, when the executioners were nailing him to the cross, "Father, forgive them; they know not what they do." It was the mood of perfect submission to what he regarded as the divine will—the mood of meek acquiescence and renunciation.

The word "saint" has fallen into disrepute. The saint is thought of as an obsolete person, the product of a worn-out system, the tradition of a by-gone age, almost as a legendary character. The image of him is seen in foreign churches; his portrait hangs in monk-

ish cells and over Catholic altars; his name is written in the calendars of the dead, but the true idea of him has been lost. We open the dictionary at the term "saint," and there find him described as "one canonized by the Church;" as if out of the Church saintliness was unknown; as "one of the blessed in heaven," none being supposable out of the realm of the disembodied; as "a sanctimonious or very religious person," the notion being held that only those who wore long faces and made long prayers were entitled to the name; as "a person eminent for piety and virtue," when, as piety and virtue are commonly understood, he may be eminent for neither. The saint is "sanctus," one who is holy. And if it be true, as some say, that holiness is "wholeness," the saint is the whole or the complete man or woman; the person fully developed. Whoever meets fairly all the requirements of character, and fills fully all the relations of life, is a saint. The partial man, defective in any respect, no matter in what respect, is no saint. The one-sided man, no matter to which side he leans, though unduly to the side of piety, is no saint. Only the whole man is the saint. According to this interpretation the true saintliness is in the future; the saint is yet to come. He is not obsolete, but possible; a hope instead of a memory. But this is too general. Such a defi-

nition defines nothing. To be clear we must be more technical.

The saint, according to the accepted use of the term, is the person who submits his will to the supreme will, saying, "Not my will, but Thine be done." In this sense saintliness has a double aspect—a negative or passive, and a positive or active. On the passive side saintliness is renunciation, acquiescence in the inevitable; not the dumb, stubborn, hard acquiescence, that simply endures what cannot be cured, and makes the best of what has to be borne. Not the stolid surrender of the victim to fate, inscrutable, purposeless, blind; but the voluntary, meek submission to intelligent and benevolent will; the child's submission to the wish of its father. Such was, in the main, the saintliness of Jesus. Its chief ingredient was renunciation, tender, sweet; a mixture of smiles and tears; now joyous, now sad, very touching, and, in certain moods of feeling, very strengthening, still; that was its prevailing tone. But the servant of the divine will must be active as well as passive, for the will itself is active. The saint must conspire as well as expire; be a fellow-worker as well as a sufferer, standing up and contending, as well as lying low. Saintliness has its heroic side, and a full half of its quality is here. The saint who is only submissive is but half a saint, as the saint who

is only heroic is but half a saint. Doing is as valid as enduring.

The saint is one who both actively and passively acquiesces in the supreme will. But how is the supreme will conceived? That is a question. For as is the will, so is the submission to it or the concurrence with it. Does it represent force, or wisdom, or love, or all three? Is it arbitrary, or rational? Is it embodied in ecclesiastical forms, or in natural law? Does it stand by a book, a formula, a priest, or by the human mind? As there are different modes of the divine manifestation, so there are different modes of saintliness. The types of sainthood correspond with types of deity.

1. There is the Hebrew type, based on the idea of the Hebrew Jehovah. The Hebrew Jehovah promulgated his will in a law, which expressed his character, revealed his purposes, and made known his requirements. It was written out in the Old Testament, instituted in temple forms, in social usages and personal customs innumerable; it had its interpreters. Saintliness consisted in obedience to this law, resignation to its mandates, consent with its requirements, zeal for its ends. The will of Jehovah being thus explicit and precise, thus literal, we may say, covering actions of every variety, the will of Jehovah appointing and decreeing everything, impelling and

ruling everything, saintliness, in both its aspects, was sharply defined. The resignation was absolute, the concurrence was intense. What Jehovah sent of pain, suffering, sorrow, was accepted without a question and endured without a murmur. There was no margin for misgiving, no room for restlessness. What Jehovah commanded was equally explicit and equally beyond question. Respecting the purport of the will there was no doubt.

Abraham showed himself a saint when he stretched his only son, Isaac, on the altar, and held over him the sacrificial knife. David showed himself a saint when he accepted the death of his child as a punishment from the Lord for his sin. Job showed himself a saint when, sitting in ashes and scraping himself with a potsherd, he said to his rebellious wife, "Shall we receive good at the hand of the Lord, and shall we not receive evil?" Samuel, on the other hand, showed himself a saint when he hewed Agag in pieces before the Lord. In Deuteronomy the Lord is described as coming with ten thousands of saints, with a fiery law. In the Epistle of Jude he is again described as coming with ten thousands of his saints to execute judgment on all. An old author gives a picture of St. James, the brother of Jesus, in these words: "He was holy from his mother's womb. Wine and strong drink took he never, no creature

that had life did he ever eat. Never came the shears near his head. He never anointed himself with oil or used the bath. He wore no garment of wool, but dressed in linen only. Alone he went to the temple, and there remained on his knees in prayer till the skin was thick as a camel's." This is the portrait of the Hebrew saint as he came to be when the glorious days of the faith were numbered and its inspirations gone.

2. There is the Roman Catholic type of saintliness, based on the Roman Catholic conception of the divine will. According to this idea, the Church is its embodiment, the Pope its representative. The divine will is as literally expressed as it can possibly be, in ordinances, rules, fixed regulations for every species of conduct, emphatic edicts from the mouth of a man which could in no case be called in question. The saint was, first of all, a good churchman: in the Church living, moving, and having his being; out of the Church acknowledging no wise or good thing. To the Church he surrendered everything, for the Church he was ready to do everything. What the Church appointed he took meekly, even when it appointed poverty, exposure, exile, obscurity, separation from friends, abode in savage countries, renunciation of opinions, desires, aims, and darling objects in life. What the Church commanded he performed,

were it to face martyrdom. The saints of the Romish Church represent perfectly both sides of this type. They carried resignation to the point of abasement, and renunciation to the point of sacrifice. They carried obedience to the point of the most exalted heroism. There was nothing they could not bear, there was nothing they could not do.

The type was monotonous, but not absolutely so. Personal peculiarities were recognized; private qualities were respected. The supreme will did not require the individual to annihilate his will—only to consecrate it; did not command the obliteration of selfhood—only its devotion; did not insist that the saint should become nothing—only that he should become nothing in and of himself; should become wholly its own—its tool.

Ignatius Loyola was a perfect saint; a man of prodigious force and determination of will; the founder of the terrible Order of Jesus—an army completely disciplined for the warfare against Protestantism. He abated no jot of his willfulness; he merely offered it all up in the service of his Church. History furnishes no more amazing example of moral force than his. He was an iron hammer, shattering men in pieces; he rode remorselessly over what are called human rights; he crushed human affections with a glove of steel. But he was a perfect saint, because

he surrendered himself without reserve to his superiors. Philip Neri was a saint in spite of an exuberant temperament, which made him perform practical jokes of a not very refined description, and gave people occasion to call him a crazy old fool. This man—who would suddenly seize the flowing beard of a soldier with both hands, and stroke it with droll caresses; who would suddenly take off his spectacles and put them astride the nose of a passer-by in the street; who would dance and caper in the public square amid a group of bystanders—was a famous saint, because he omitted none of the ceremonies the Church prescribed, and declined nothing the Church ordered him to do.

Carlo Borromeo was a perfect saint—perhaps as complete an example of a saint as the Romish Church can produce; as complete an example as can be imagined under that system. He was a saint though a gentleman; a saint though a prince; a saint though the possessor of large estates; for he made himself in every particular the servant of the Church, putting himself, with all he had and could do, at its bidding. The story of his life is full of most touching acts of renunciation and of heroism. His meekness, on the one side, his indomitable courage, on the other, excite in the reader nothing short of wonder. His conduct, during the plague in Italy, when Boccaccio and his

gay friends retired to their villas and spent the days in telling obscene stories, is one of the marvels of biography. The spirit of the Church fairly possessed him. His temperance, his chastity, his modesty, his humility, his charity, his disinterestedness, his zeal for righteousness, are the theme of admiration with Protestant writers. But these fine qualities were so pinched and distorted by the meanness of his conception of the supreme will—were made so technical, formal, and artificial—the native sap was so entirely strained out of them, that they look like dried autumn leaves in an album. He used to scourge himself because other people did wrong; and sleep on a board, and barely eat enough to sustain life. He never would be left alone with a woman, though it were his own sister; and would never allow himself to look a woman in the face. He had a piece of wood buried in consecrated soil, because it was carved in the image of a saint; he never read the Bible except on his knees, and he had a hole cut in his trousers that his skin might have the full benefit of the exercise. Never, it would seem, were such greatness and such littleness combined. Never was so grand a soul made subject to a less noble conception of the Supreme.

But this could not be helped. As is the master, so is the servant; as is the altar, so is the priest; as is

the deity, so is the worshipper; as is the sanctity, so is the saintliness. The narrow doctrine makes the narrow man.

3. When we come to Protestantism we are in another climate. The Protestant saint is a superior being, but by no means a *whole* being. In Protestantism the supreme will is represented by Christ. The saint is the servant of Christ; the believer in his mission; the seeker of his salvation. To live for Christ is saintliness. To have Christ formed within him, mind of his mind, heart of his heart, will of his will, is the aim of his endeavor. And that Christ may be formed within, other things must be expelled to make room for him -mind's curiosity, heart's desire, will's devotion to pursuits deemed worldly. The saint in his zeal for Christ is but half-hearted in business; has misgivings in regard to the lawfulness of his love of art, music, literature; fears that his affection for wife and children may detract from the entireness of his hospitality to the Christ.

He is devoted to spiritual objects; he is consecrated to the invisible world. The Lord of his salvation is Lord of his life; he exists for his soul. Whatever its interests impose he accepts uncomplainingly, meets with fortitude, achieves with courage. The next world is his goal; in this he is a stranger and a pilgrim. Its pursuits are incidental; its interests are

subordinate; its prizes are lures; its triumphs are temptations; its joys are deceitful; its pleasures are dangerous; its high ambitions are misleading. He passes through it, as it were, by stealth, as a spy passes through a hostile camp; as a traveller goes across a hostile frontier, keeping aloof as much as he can from observation, and avoiding even a momentary detention by the inhabitants. He dares not call anything his own; his very children he holds himself ready to resign at the call of his Lord. Beauty, strength, grace, position, reputation, are but labels which he drops at death, or sooner if so it must be. The amusements of men—the dance, the theatre, the opera—are spurned as enticements of the Evil One; art is looked on with suspicion, and music with misgiving. The ends of existence lie beyond the veil. There are the rewards, there the punishments. This world is the portal of the world eternal. Make it comely and beautiful; cast out the thieves and beggars; drive away the vicious and guilty; but remember that it is but a vestibule you are cleaning, after all. You are not residents there, or worshippers. Your home is in the temple; you but use the vestibule in reaching it, and you pass through the vestibule without pausing, looking neither to the right nor to the left.

That the saintliness nurtured on this conception of

the supreme will has qualities of great loveliness and dignity it would be useless to deny. The Protestant saint is a very remarkable and a very admirable person. A little austere, perhaps, in his moral traits, more strict than is graceful in his purity and abstinence, bordering on the ascetic in his habits, too little disposed to be indulgent to the weakness of human feeling, undervaluing the wealth of existence, he is yet very noble in his stern moderation, his power of self-denial, his superiority to fleshly infirmities, his contempt of passion, his indifference to the idle gauds of fashion. His power of devotion to his Master's cause is wonderful. The history of Protestant missions, whether at home or abroad, is a history of magnificent consecration to perfectly ideal ends. With the purpose to be simply obedient to the divine will as apprehended, men and women have been stimulated to prodigious efforts of thought and action. In the hope of bringing souls to Christ they have put away earthly ambition, have left country and friends, have crossed seas, have faced the howling wilderness, have studied strange tongues, have offered their mental powers freely to what would seem a hopeless, certainly to a thankless task, and have laid down their bones in a foreign soil without repining or regret. There is a grandeur about them beyond that of the Romanist; for the latter simply obeys a literal com-

mand of his superior, while the former is swayed by an idea. His Christ is an intellectual conception. He is not presented on the canvas, or in the carved image; he does not hang in symbol on the crucifix, or come to him in vision, or show himself in the mass. He is apprehended by faith and love alone—a purely mental image. The supreme will is to him a thought, to be worked into the mind by great effort to keep it near and vigorous. Imagination must be awake to make the invisible world real; for he has no visible image as the Catholic has—no wafer, no rosary, no relic, no consecrated sign or talisman, the touch whereof renews at any moment the sensible impression of insensible realities. He must think, feel, aspire with living heart, else the vision fades away and the supreme will becomes a phantom. The Protestant saint has, therefore, more mind than the Catholic. He lifts his eyes higher; commands a wider horizon; sees a grander world; entertains more ideas; looks forward further; holds the divine realities by finer threads. His self-surrender is more that of a rational being—less that of a serf. He has a larger play of powers; employs a wider range of faculties; becomes, in a word, a more human creature.

Still, he has his limitations, and fearful limitations they are. The Protestant saint is narrow. His doctrine hems him in—pinches and contracts him. In

surrendering his will to the divine will, he actually surrenders portions of himself—his natural tastes, his reason, his thirst for knowledge, perhaps the sweetness of his natural affection. He is considerably less than a whole man—less by the loss of faith in his own nature, which he has schooled himself to distrust. His aims, too, are visionary. His ambition is not to excel in manly qualities to achieve solid successes. He is continually gazing beyond the interests in which men are absorbed, after interests in which he thinks they should be absorbed. The Protestant saint is not, therefore, in the simplest, homeliest way, useful to his fellow-men; he is off the track of living concerns, and has a spectral look, except as, for a moment, he does battle with some evil, like war, slavery, or intemperance, which he thinks the divine will abhors. But even when bending his energies against this, his eye is fixed on the purely fantastical object of reconciling souls with Christ. He is not, after all, so much in sympathy with humanity, as in league with a theological system. It is difficult to think these things when we have in view the best examples of Protestant saintliness; when we consider such lives as Judson's, Oberlin's, Neff's—the heroes and heroines of New England—men and women who existed for the sake of their immortal part, as they deemed it, and were ready to lose or give everything they had

or were, rather than put in jeopardy their infinite concerns. Yet it is certain that saintliness of this stamp commends itself rather to our admiration of the eccentric, exceptional, and superhuman, than to our appreciation of the wise and just. When Protestantism was fresh, and the faith in Christ was genuine, and interest in the soul's salvation was deep, and the sense of invisible things was keen, and the supreme will had something of the intense personal reality it had to the ancient Hebrews, Protestant saintliness was a vigorous and admirable thing. But now, when Protestantism is languishing, when faith in Christ is declining, when interest in the soul's salvation is slight, and the sense of invisible things is dim, and the supreme will has become associated with vast forces, the saintliness is a little ghastly and formal. It looks like an imitation; it savors of cant and hypocrisy. The saint is easily confounded with the pharisee; and so, instead of being reputed a saint, passes for a sinner.

4. We must have a new conception of the supreme will, if we would have a new type of saintliness. That conception is among us, accepted now by most rational minds. Suppose we see the supreme will, not in the Law of Moses, not in the Church, not in the Christ, but in what we call, for want of a better name, Natural Law; in the ordinances made for the

preservation of health, the increase of intelligent power, the promotion of moral activities, the maintenance of friendly relations between the classes of mankind, the establishment of peace, the upholding of justice, the advance of humanity in social righteousness. Suppose we say the supreme will decrees wholeness in man's individual and public estate; the completest expansion, development, correspondence of powers; better civilization, more honest governments, closer sympathy between interests, nobler realization of human rights and duties. In a word, suppose we see the supreme will as a power working for light, liberty, justice, and love. It is evident that a new type of the saint is suggested. He has on his lips the same motto that has been the saint's motto from time immemorial: "Not my will, but Thine be done." Still he holds himself to be a servant; still he practises renunciation—is meek, humble, consecrated; still he works for ends that are not, in the ordinary sense, selfish; is a soldier under discipline; but instead of cramping or stultifying himself in any way, he feels himself stimulated, drawn out, his every faculty strung to its utmost in the endeavor to satisfy the claims of his king, who will accept no mutilated men. By obedience to the organic conditions of health; by loyalty to the rules that secure happiness in personal and social relations;

by allegiance to the larger principles of kindness, that watch over the prosperity of communities and maintain the steadfastness of States; by cheerfully serving the public weal at the cost of private pleasure and personal ease; by forgetting self in the grander selfhood of the age he lives in and the race of which he is a member; by consenting to be of no reputation if only intelligence and virtue may come to honor; in a word, by doing his best that the best may prevail, the modern citizen becomes the modern saint.

Examples of this type are not numerous, for the type is new; still they are not rare. If we put accessories aside and pierce to the core of the matter, we shall find, possibly, that they are more in number than we should suspect. A man died ten days ago who presents to my mind, not a perfect example of the new saintliness, that, at the period, must not be looked for, but a very striking example of it, perhaps the most striking we shall find—I mean Charles Sumner. Many will smile when Charles Sumner is spoken of as a saint. He has been eulogized as a scholar, a man of letters, an orator, politician, statesman, patriot, philanthropist; he has not been considered as a saint; and yet it is as a saint that he best deserves to be mentioned; a saint before anything else he seems to me to have been; and it is for the reason that to most he seems

so far from a saint that I emphasize his saintliness. Certainly he was not a devout man; not an *un*devout man, not in the least a scorner or scoffer, not light-minded or loose tongued—quite the contrary. He was a man most decorous in speech and manner, still not a devout man; not a man of religious emotion, of deep sensibility on the religious side; not a man of prayer or closet meditations, or exuberant feeling God-ward. He was a Unitarian of moderate views, an attendant on the services of his church when convenient, but not anxious to make it, under all circumstances, convenient. The Sunday was a good day with him for work or social recreation. That he gave much thought to religious subjects cannot be affirmed; that he was a diligent reader of the Bible, or an inquirer into the merits of religious controversy. That he appreciated the influence of religious institutions appears from the remark he is said to have addressed to M. Thiers, that the thing France needed most was a religion. But that in the conventional sense of the word he was a religious man none probably would venture to claim. He was a secular man through and through.

Nor was meekness one of his characteristics. In the passive virtues he did not excel. The virtue of humility, as technically defined, did not belong to him. On the contrary, he was self-asserting to the

point of being imperious and overbearing. Men called him conceited, egotistical, and were displeased by what seemed in him an overweening consciousness of his self-importance. The weight of mind in him, the mass of learning he possessed, his intellectual competency, gave him a momentum that bore down before it weaker men. A sweet, yielding, sentimental person he was not; neither was Loyola, or Luther, or Parker. There was a great preponderance of mind in him, and he made it felt. Notwithstanding all this, I call him a saint. Nay, because of all this I am disposed to claim for him the saintly character. He who has no will can resign none. The saint is not the man who loses his will, but the man who keeps and consecrates it.

And this Charles Sumner did. In certain cardinal respects he was a whole man; that is, a normally-proportioned man.

1. Personally he was so. He had no disorganizing passions, no corroding vices. He was moderate in food and drink; he was chaste; his appetites were in subjection to his reason, his impulses were under control of his judgment. His moral character was massive in its elements. He was incorruptible in honor; he was immovable by promise or threat; he scorned a bribe; he was unapproachable by the political designer. In the course of a long public life he was

never, in a single instance, charged, he was never, in a single instance, suspected, he was never, in a single instance, associated by rumor with men who played fast and loose with common honesty, or tried, by any shrewd diplomacy, to get for themselves or their friends more than was due. His moral integrity was reckoned on in advance; we all felt sure, in every emergency, that whose skirts soever were soiled, Charles Sumner's were not. His faith with himself was sternly kept.

2. His power of renunciation for a principle was very great. Dr. Brown-Sequard says that he bore, without a murmur, the most intense agony he ever inflicted on mortal—bore it five times, refusing chloroform because it might possibly impair slightly the efficacy of the treatment, and ever so little retard the recovery which was indispensable to the public service. On his return from his first visit to Europe, on the threshold of a great career, the ornament of an aristocratic class in Boston, the pet of society, the favorite in all circles, he deliberately turned away from it all, by his advocacy of opinions not only unpopular, but offensive to his class. He knew what the world was worth; adulation was pleasant to him; the prizes of ambition were attractive, but he heard another call in his conscience which he regarded as the organ of the divine justice, and he

said, "Thy will be done." His great oration on "The True Grandeur of Nations" earned for him the name of visionary; his early identification with the anti-slavery party in his State earned for him the name of fanatic and fool. His fine friends forsook him, his respectable acquaintances passed him by on the other side, the festive invitations ceased; he was regarded as one who had thrown away magnificent opportunities for a chimerical idea. But he followed the idea, allowed himself to be associated with obscure and ill-reputed men, his countenance all the time becoming brighter, and his spirit more serene.

Then came political hate which, thirty years ago, was more rancorous than we have any conception of—hate that went all lengths, even to the length of personal assault. He bore it all, not in the spirit of a partisan, not like a man who is sustained by private ambition, not like a soldier who is fighting for a side, but with the composed resolution of one who believed he had caught sight of a great principle, the establishment of which was of more consequence than the private happiness of a generation of men. After the brutal assault on him in the Senate chamber, when he was suffering agonies of pain and weakness, and hardly dared to look forward to any future but one of hopeless invalidism and imbecility, he declared

that he had no regrets for what he had done—that he would utter the same truths again under the same circumstances, be the consequences what they might be. Let those who will call this temper, it was the temper that the best steel takes on when passed through the fiercest flame.

With Charles Sumner the supreme will stood for fundamental and complete equity, for the largest realization of human rights, and the most generous performance of human duties. A senator from Massachusetts, he held in profound veneration the noblest traditions of his State, and deemed it a solemn privilege to represent and sustain them. He was no politician dabbling in party tricks; he was not, perhaps, a statesman, using such materials as he had for the best interests of the common weal. He was a devotee to moral principle, the servant of cardinal ideas, the prophet of political conscience; an impracticable man, therefore, not to be reckoned on by the party leaders, nor even to be held by party traditions, but seizing, as well as he could, the interior spirit of republican institutions, and throwing his weight on the side which promised most for justice.

I say republican institutions. For the supreme will he served, ruled the nation, and not alone the State. The welfare of the people was his aim; justice for all classes, equity for all conditions. Dis-

tinctions of color and of race were nothing to him. The supreme will was human. His great oration on the "Law of Progress" struck the iron string which resounded through his life. He recognized the truth that the supreme will is more than all collective wills, that it is above all constituted society, is superior to all organized institutions; that the best human laws are but feeble efforts to express it, that the best governments are but poor attempts to embody it, that its seat is indeed in the bosom of God, that its voice is the harmony of the world.

Now, a man who lives for ends like these, who will thus bear and thus do, is a saint. He may be a scholar, as Sumner was, a man of books, a lover of art, a connoisseur in paintings, a collector of engravings, a rich appreciator of the world's good things; all the more, on these accounts, is he a saint, for all the more does he give when he gives himself. He said to me, in the early part of the war, that, though Washington was full of soldiers, he had not seen a camp or a review; that though sanitary commissions were busy, he had never visited a hospital. His time was not his own.

Reviewing such a career as this, dispassionately, not as in the shadow of the tomb, but in the open day of life, bearing in mind all the while its infirmities and mistakes of judgment, if such there were, in

full view of some things hard, ungenial, or unpleasant, I cannot lose my faith in the reality of saintliness. The modern saint is, to me, more glorious than the ancient, because larger, broader, more natural, more sympathetic, more human. The forms of saintliness change; the soul of saintliness survives. I cannot doubt that it will survive; that they will be more rather than fewer who live for something beyond their own dignity, ease, or power, and prove that the true saint and the true man are one.

THE

DISPOSAL OF OUR DEAD

A

SERMON

BY

O B. FROTHINGHAM,

PREACHED IN

LYRIC HALL,

SIXTH AVENUE BETWEEN FORTY-FIRST AND FORTY-SECOND STS

May 3d, 1874.

NEW YORK
D. G. FRANCIS, 17 ASTOR PLACE
1874.

BOOKS BY
OCTAVIUS B. FROTHINGHAM.

THE RELIGION OF HUMANITY,

AN ESSAY

SECOND EDITION.

Revised, with Fine Steel Portrait of Author.

Price, $1.50.

CHILD'S BOOK OF RELIGION,

FOR SUNDAY-SCHOOLS AND HOMES.

Price, $1.00.

STORIES FROM THE LIPS OF THE TEACHER

RE-TOLD BY A DISCIPLE.

With Illustrations. Cloth, $1.00.

"Mr. Frothingham has given to this work the inexpressible charm of his own vivid imagination and affluent and graphic style, in rendering these most beautiful and deep apologues of the Divine Master, and attempting to make the New Testament a more living book to the young people of this day."—*Salem Register.*

STORIES OF THE PATRIARCHS,

UNIFORM WITH THE PRECEDING.

Price, $1.00.

"A work of culture and taste; it will be welcome to all ages, and gives the sublimest lessons of manhood in the simple language of a child."—*Springfield Republican.*

THE BELIEFS OF THE UNBELIEVERS,

A LECTURE READ IN BOSTON, JAN. 8, 1871.

Price, 20 cents.

DAVID G. FRANCIS,
17 ASTOR PLACE, NEW YORK.

THE DISPOSAL OF OUR DEAD.

The theme I have chosen for this discourse is one that has already taken a strong hold on the public mind, and is destined to be fully discussed in its various aspects: I mean the substitution of burning for burial; the adoption of fire, in the place of earth, as the power that shall decompose our bodies—reducing ashes to ashes, instead of dust to dust. The practice, though it has fallen into disuse and become unpopular, is as old as any, and as honorable. The discussion of it in modern times is not new; in Europe, at least, the idea has become familiar. It is favorably entertained by people of opposite cast of mind; by men of science, and men of religion; means have been perfected for making the idea an institution; and the ancient custom has been actually, in some countries, in essence, though not in form, revived. The sudden interest excited abroad and at home in the question, is due not to any love of novelty or desire for change; it comes from the side, neither of an excessive spiritualism nor of an excessive materialism; but is rather another phase of the interest in the

whole welfare of the living that is now engaging so much earnest thought. The care of men and women is characteristic of our time; it addresses itself to every department of life. It appears in better provisions for physical health; in thoughtfulness for the rearing and nurture of children; in the study of sanitary science, in improved methods of regulating cities; in solicitude for the housing and distribution of families; in short, in every kind of concern for temporal comfort. The subject of cremation falls immediately in the line of these discussions. It is a subject that is felt to be of vital moment to the living; and, by those who have the well-being of the living at heart, is to be approached in an earnest and serious spirit, for it is a subject that concerns us as human beings—not as adherents of a peculiar faith, or members of a particular church, or believers in a special creed. The movement in favor of cremation is not an infidel or pagan movement, but one in which a bishop may feel as deep an interest as a rationalist; a devotee as a doctor; a minister as a materialist; the most delicate and poetic, as the coarsest and most prosaic mind. Its significance is in its simple humanity.

Christendom borrowed, or rather inherited its custom of interring the dead, from the Hebrews, with whom it was universal. The burning of the dead is

scarcely mentioned in the Old Testament. But one case is spoken of in which bodies were actually burned—the case of Saul and his sons; but the narrative is not clear, and the instance was clearly an exception to a general rule. The burning there, moreover, was but partial, for the rites of sepulture were afterwards performed on the bones. Jacob and Joseph were embalmed, after the Egyptian fashion, for their more complete preservation. The care which Abraham took to purchase a plot of ground in Macpelah, as a family burial-place, was continued by his descendants. The tenderest feelings gathered around the family tomb. To be gathered to one's fathers was the familiar phrase applied to death. To remain unburied was revolting to the Jewish mind. It was the last misfortune. Even executed criminals were not allowed to remain unburied after sunset of the day of their execution. No doubt the dread of infection had its share in suggesting such an enactment—a danger at times so great, that, at least on one occasion, relatives were bidden to burn their dead to escape from it. The Hebrew burial-places were sacred. They were usually outside of the cities—only kings and prophets being honored with interment within the walls. The graves were commonly caves or grottoes, situated in shady, cool retreats, surrounded by trees. The suggestion for our

ornamental cemeteries may well have been derived from the usage of the ancient Hebrews, whose burial-places were often gardens. The graves were either dug, as ours are, in the earth, or hewn out in the side of a rock; in either case carefully guarded against spoliation. The tombs were often costly and magnificent—splendid mausoleums not unfrequently—with many chambers, where each person might lie, in his own separate niche, and so preserve individuality in death. Reverence for the dead body was profound.

The custom of interment did not rest solely in private or social feeling. There was an idea in it: the idea that the body contained, in some sense, the soul; and that its burial was somehow a guarantee of the soul's peace. This idea was spread widely through the ancient world. Primitive rites of interment indicated plainly that, when a body was buried, something living was supposed to be buried with it. The expression: "We enclose the soul in the grave;" the custom of calling thrice on the soul of the deceased person; the wish that he might live happy in his abode under the ground; the three farewells; the writing of the name on the tomb; the habit of burying with the body vestments, utensils, arms; of bringing food and wine to the sepulchre at stated seasons—all suggest that the soul was believed to remain with the body in the subterranean abode.

The body being unburied, the soul was not at rest, but hovered sadly about the lifeless form, or wandered, an unhappy spirit, or a malignant demon, tormenting the living with diseases, bringing misfortune on them, terrifying them as spectres—now pleading, now threatening, if by any means it might obtain sepulture. Hence the universal anxiety respecting burial; the directions given concerning it; the care that it should be done properly; the solemnity of the duty that was devolved on relatives and friends in regard to the last funeral rites. Hence the desperate efforts to rescue the bodies of chiefs slain in battle, that their souls might have rest in the sacred earth, instead of roving in sadness, as they must, if the bodies fell into the enemy's hands, and were left a prey to vultures and jackals. It seems to have been the earliest opinion that men lived in the tomb; that souls did not leave bodies, but stayed fixed to that piece of ground where the bones were interred.

This belief prevailed, and may be distinctly found, with certain tribes of North America. The evidence of such a belief cannot be detailed here, and need not be, if it could; for the bare indication of it is enough for my purpose. But evidence there is to show that the aborigines of this continent did, here and there, hold the doctrine, in a clear and emphatic form, that the soul would return to the bones; that the bones

would once more take on the covering of flesh; and that thus the man would rejoin his tribe. Language was employed very similar to that used by Paul, in the famous chapter of I. Corinthians. The bodies of the dead were spoken of as seeds, which, planted in the earth, or preserved safely in sheltered places, would in time germinate into living beings. In some dialects, the word for bone and the word for soul are essentially the same; the word for soul literally denoted "that which is within the bone." The same doctrine was applied to the bones of animals. (Brinton's "Myths of the New World," p. 254, &c.)

A belief not remotely akin to this may be found in the Old Testament. From the beginning, the Hebrews closely associated the soul with the body; and even when the notion of an under world for departed spirits, as distinct from the grave, had become well developed, the body was not left out of the account in the anticipation of a future state. The prophet Isaiah, speaking of the dead bodies of Israel's enemies, cries exultingly: "They are bodies that shall not rise again; shadows that shall not reappear; but *thy* bodies (oh, Israel!) shall revive: the corpses of my own people shall be restored." The vision of the valley of dry bones, in Ezekiel, implies the same faith. Daniel, in plain words, announces a time at hand when "many of those that sleep in the dust of

the earth shall awake—some to everlasting life, and some to shame and everlasting contempt." Such representations prove sufficiently that belief in a resurrection of the dead, and a reunion of souls with their former bodies, and a continuance of the old human life on a new earth, was widely spread among the people. In the story of the Maccabees, the faith comes out with startling prominence. The heroes, mutilated and dying, console themselves and cheer one another by the thought that the members the tormenters had wrenched off would be restored to them at the last day; and the writer of the book solemnly ratifies the expression of such a hope. The Pharisaic belief in a resurrection involved, as one of its chief features, the revival, in some shape, of the form. The later rabbins refined on the idea; some of them surmising that, in a particular bone, the "ossiculum luz," lay the germ of the future body, which, at the proper time, would appear in health and beauty, like the plant from its seed. Through Paul—who was a Pharisee, and who taught the resurrection of a spiritual form from the carnal body, which could not, itself, enter the kingdom of heaven—the doctrine passed over to the Christian Church, where it became domesticated, and has found an abiding-place ever since.

On such a basis as this that I have described rests

the practice of burying the dead. Thus deeply is the custom rooted in natural feeling, reverence, and faith. Thus dear is it through long experience and pious hope; thus closely wrought into the texture of the human mind. Lovely sentiments were associated with it. The buried dead seemed to preserve their identity after their decease; to the survivors they were still real as persons—palpable forms yet, although temporarily removed from sight. The dead had abodes; they were a company, a commonwealth; the cemetery was an underground city. The living lingered lovingly about the place where the departed lay; they fixed themselves in the neighborhood, made permanent homes, formed strong attachments to the soil, cultivated the spirit of permanence, and knit their communities together by steadfast clamps of association. To the practice of interment may be due, in a considerable degree, the solidity and persistency of the people, who would endure anything rather than leave or be driven away from their dead, whom they could not carry with them to other lands.

How sweet, too, the sentiment of rest that was associated with the grave where the beloved one lay! It is wonderfully expressed in Job. "Why died I not on issuing from the womb? For now should I have lain still and been quiet; I should have slept; I should have been at rest with kings and

counsellors of the earth; with princes that had gold and filled their houses with silver. There the wicked cease from troubling, there the weary are at rest. There the prisoners repose together; they hear not the voice of the oppressor. The small and the great are there; the servant is free from his master." These pathetic words come to us now whenever we think of the still forms that lie so peacefully beneath the monument or the sod, sleeping their unbroken sleep "after life's fitful fever." We know, on reflection, that this is illusion. We know that there is no stillness in the grave; that Nature, which never rests, and allows no rest to organized or unorganized thing—Nature, which abhors rest, respecting not even the dread repose of death, seizes at once the cast-off body, and with occult chemistry and slow burning decomposes and consumes it. But the ancients did not know this as we do. That the body, left above ground, decayed, they perceived; and, to prevent the effect of it, would even resort to burning on occasion; but of all that went on beneath the ground they were not aware. They could not, therefore, be sensible, as we are, of the serious perils that were involved in their practice. That it endangered the health of the living they never conjectured. They did not care so much for the living—that is, for the masses of the living, as we do; they were not

such nice observers of cause and effect either; if the calamity fell, they did not trace it to that quarter; if the ravage came, that practice was not held responsible. The land was nowhere so thickly populated that room for interment could not be obtained in the vicinity of human dwellings; or, if it was, intramural sepulture was not regarded as dangerous. It was not suspected that the pestilence that walked abroad at noon-day, and the arrow that flew by night, proceeded from those sacred receptacles where they had so carefully, and with such tender ceremony, deposited the remains of their friends.

But all this we see, and cannot be blind to. The eager science of our century, exploring the secret places of the earth and air, analyzing all substances, and resolving the elements into finer elements, detecting the trail of the imponderable gases, and following the windings of invisible currents of movement, has brought to noon-day light the astounding fact that the dead are persecutors of the living, not as haunting spectres, but as mouldering forms. Yes, there is no room to doubt that men and women who have been healers and comforters during life, may be destroyers and saddeners after death; that they who were living benedictions may be dead curses; that they whose presence sweetened the air, whose breath was an aroma, became poisoners on leaving the earth;

the grave, which their friends think of so tenderly, visit so piously, mourn over so sincerely, ponder upon so tranquilly, being, in fact, a laboratory where are manufactured the poisons that waste the fair places of existence, and very likely smite to the heart their own lovers. It is now demonstrated, the fact is attested by scientific observers and corroborated by medical testimony of unquestionable value, that the common practice of interring the dead is positively pernicious to the living. Were this the place to detail the evidence or give the testimonies at length, it would be easy to quote authorities from works within reach of all who can read. But now there is time only to say, in general terms, that the revelations made on this subject are of a nature to awaken serious reflection on the practice which, from old association, has become so dear to us, and to suggest a duty, on the part of true religion, to desist from a custom which the old religions sanctioned. There are many who feel that it is a case of religion against religion; religion enlightened by knowledge and sweetened by humanity, against a religion clothed in an ignorance that could not be put off, and associated with rites that could not be dispensed with.

Thirty years ago a systematic examination of the graveyards of London, made by well-known and trustworthy persons, disclosed a state of things that smote

the public with horror. People learned to shudder at the pretty green spots they had thought so pleasant to the eye. There was a strong feeling of objection to intramural interments, which found its way to America. Acts of Parliament were passed prohibiting it. What could be done was done to stay an evil, by putting the worst of the abominations away. Vaults were sealed; in some instances the dead were removed and carried off to a considerable distance. But such removal, while it relieved a locality, did not abolish a process. The same thing went on outside of the city that went on within it. An evil was removed, but was not exterminated. Air was still poisoned, though it was not the air which thousands of human creatures breathed; water was still tainted, though not the water which thousands of human creatures drank; soil was filled with noxious vapors, though not the soil on which thousands of people built their habitations. Those mural cemeteries were once in the fields till the houses crowded upon them; these cemeteries in the fields will one day be in cities, when the exigencies of the growing population shall have filled up the intervening space between them and the village border. If intramural interment is dangerous, all interments are dangerous; for that which makes them palpably unsafe in the one case, and apparently innocent in the other, is merely the circumstance of being in their

neighborhood or not; a variable circumstance that has no solid or permanent weight, and never could have unless a safety line could be clearly drawn, and a complete seclusion effected from the approach of all deleterious influence.

But to effect such complete seclusion as would answer the purpose is practically impossible. The air is never still above the city of the dead, but like other air is set in motion by natural causes, and spreads its health-giving or disease-breeding elements abroad over wide reaches of territory. The springs of water, and currents from distant hills and rivulets formed by the falling of the summer's rain or the melting of the winter's snow, obey the law that governs all fluid bodies, trickle in directions that nobody knows of, and mingle with the streams that quench the thirst of villages and supply the need of cities. The water we drink and the air we breathe have histories that none can recite, and are employed in offices that none can question; and this being so, there is wisdom in doing what we can to make the history a pleasant one and the function blameless.

The earth is a powerful disinfectant, but it may be overworked. The London Report, before alluded to, contains this remarkable sentence: "We may safely rest the sanitary part of the case on the single fact, that the placing of the dead body in a grave, and

covering it with a few feet of earth, does not prevent the gases generated by decomposition from permeating the surrounding soil and escaping into the air above and the water beneath." Trustworthy authority is quoted to show that the absorbent qualities of the soil are, at present, not always sufficient to discharge deleterious gases of their noxious effect.

Researches into the composition of soil and water in different localities make it abundantly evident that emanations from the ground, striking upward and downward, are vigorous causes of disease and death; low, malignant fevers, dysentery, cholera, have here their source. In places and periods of more than usual mortality these causes are found to be active. We hear of this continually from boards of health and medical inspectors, whose business it is to watch over the sanitary conditions of our cities, to warn people against the perils of insufficient drainage, neglected garbage, and impure atmosphere. It is only another cry from the same voice that would put us on our guard against another unsuspected source of mischief.

This is the strong point against interment, and it is a point strong enough to overbalance many lesser arguments on the other side. There are other points that deserve consideration. The English economist, for example, objects to the ceaseless waste of an important natural fertilizer, which, under the existing cus-

tom, is sequestered from use, thus entailing a direct expense by its loss, and imposing another expense by the necessity of importing a substitute, in the very same form as that which was squandered ("Popular Science Monthly," March, 1874, p. 597); a consideration that looks light enough when mentioned in general terms, but which, when fairly taken in pieces and weighed, has great force—in an old country like England, immense force. The economist objects against the cost of interment to the poor in all cities and large towns. They must purchase land, keep it in order, employ men to prepare the receptacle for their dead, transport them no small distance thither, and, if they wish to mark the place with a suitable memorial, take from their scanty income the means necessary to do it. This objection has little weight now in country villages and small towns, where the land is cheap and the open fields are within easy reach; but in great cities like New York the tax, as I have reason to know, presses heavily already on people of moderate means who wish to preserve their self-respect and perform what the customs of society require. Every clergyman knows that the tax on such as these is serious, and cannot be paid without encroaching on the provisions for comfortable subsistence.

But this is not the point I would urge here. The prime consideration is that of the public health, and they must

be very momentous arguments that can countervail this. No sentimental or religious considerations can be fairly urged, for the healthy sentiment is ever the noblest sentiment, and every form of religion must give way to the religion that consults human weal. The religion that is satisfied to make or keep the earth a graveyard in face of all consequences, is not for these times.

There is but one method of disposing of the dead that is not open to similar objections, or to others almost equally weighty, peculiar to itself: that is the removal of them by fire. The practice of burning the dead does not, as I have said, yield in antiquity or in honorableness to the one we adopt. It is found among people in all respects as intelligent, refined, and worshipful as any. It is associated with feelings of the noblest kind, with veneration and tenderness, and regard to moral obligations. This practice, too, has an idea at the centre of it; a religious idea, and, curiously, an idea intimately connected with that of immortality. It is the fashion to call cremation a pagan custom; and so it is; but it must be remembered that the whole ancient world was pagan, in the usual sense of the word; and that, in their day, the pagans were the greatest people on earth. If pagans burned, pagans buried too: the worst of pagans buried; so that if there is any reproach in the paganism it must be shared by the custom of interment.

The practice of burning the dead was sacred with people who, in the sun, the central fire, the glowing source of life, the visible lord of creation, saw the emblem of the Supreme Being. Fire was the holy element, spiritual, pure at once and purifying. These people kept the sacred fire always burning in their temples and their houses. It was divine; they worshipped it; they ascribed power to it—power to bestow health and happiness. They prayed to it, the eternal, the ever young, the ever beautiful, the universal nourisher and bestower of good. We find this worship throughout the East—in India, Greece, Italy. It dates back to the time when there were no Italians, Greeks, or Indians; before the tribes that came from Central Asia separated into groups of nations. How it came to the Continent of America will never, probably, be known. But on the Continent of America it has been found, and wherever found it has been in connection with the custom of burning the dead. (Brinton, p. 144.) This was a privilege commonly reserved for the few, the priests and the nobles, who were destined not to rot in the ground like the vulgar herd, but to mount aloft to immortality on the wings of flame. Not to be burned was the sign of humiliation; not to be burned was to be condemned to transformation into some bestial form. Fire meant life, and to be taken up by

fire was to be lifted to the higher regions of life. The fire consumed only what must die; it sublimated and purified everything that could not. The soul being formless, the destruction of the body did not compromise its identity. Rather the consumption of the body by the immortal flame rendered the spirit wholly free to assume a new environment, and fashion its own form from the elements furnished by its new conditions of existence.

Christians object to cremation that it destroys the soul's tabernacle, and thwarts the hope of personal resurrection. How can the form revive after such a process? A moment's reflection suggests that, as nothing less than a miracle of Almighty power will avail to restore the form that has been dissipated into vapors by the chemistry of the soil, the same exertion of power will avail to restore it when it has been dissipated by the action of flame. To recover a shape from a heap of ashes can be no more difficult than to recover it from a mound of dust. The slow burning in the earth is as fatal to identity as the swift burning in the fire. The final result is as imponderable. If there be somewhere within the frame a spiritual form which disengages itself at death, or if, in some deep recess of it, there be an infinitesimal germ of life from which the spiritual man shall spring, fire could no more injure it than earth. It must, from its

nature, be imperishable. Religiously viewed, the idea that animates the believer in cremation is nobler than the idea that animates the believer in interment; for, taking literally the statement that flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God, it makes haste to put them away, that the incorruptible portion may ascend by its proper motion to its celestial abode. They to whom the practice of cremation is native regard with compassion such as practise interment.

But to us the practice of cremation is recommended on the same ground that the other practice is condemned: namely, the ground of human welfare, the comfort and safety of the living. It is recommended on other grounds also. On the score of economy it has the advantage. It dispenses with several conditions of expense, and with the conditions that bear hardest on poor people—the necessity of buying land, of constructing sepulchres, of transporting the dead long distances to their final home. The process of reducing the body to ashes is inexpensive; it requires little time, it involves no costly preliminaries, no toilsome and fatiguing journey. Such considerations are not mercenary; far from it. If one is ever mercenary, it should not be at the hour of death. Avarice never looks so vile as when it would save a few miserable dollars by scrimping the decent arrangements of a funeral. It is only natural that we should

lavish generously our tributes on the silent forms of those we have loved; that we should enclose them in precious wood, and cover them in seemly raiment, and make them fragrant with flowers. I would rather encourage this than rebuke it; and that it may be encouraged, I would reduce the unavoidable expense to the lowest practicable sum, thus allowing a margin for the pure gratification of feeling. The available means should not be quite exhausted in the bare task of putting the now useless form away from sight. Let the saddest and most indispensable part of the last rites tax no more, than cannot be avoided, the light purses of the artisan and mechanic; and let the most of what can be spared be put at the disposition of pure affection; for this is consolation, while the other is agony. It is claimed already for cremation, and it will be claimed more and more, that it allows this margin, and thus plays into the hands of love.

On the æsthetic side, the side of beauty and grace, the practice of burning has clearly the advantage. It presents a sweeter field of contemplation to those who look beyond the moment of disappearance, into the day after death, and follow even a little way the destiny of the vanished form. The substitution of a swift and silent process of transmutation for the slow and distressing one of decay is, when fairly considered, a relief to the mind. The substitution of a

pile of white ashes which the eye may look at without offence, for the mass of corruption which the eye cannot look at, or the mind contemplate at all; the substitution of a skilfully-contrived and well-arranged receptacle for the unsightly grave; of the graceful urn for the shapeless mound is, of itself, a recommendation. The funeral ceremony may preserve all its solemnity and beauty. Everything may be done that is now done, everything that can be done, before the body is dismissed forever from view: prayers may be said, hymns sung, words of memory, hope, and benediction spoken, tender greetings of the living and farewells to the dead expressed; the whole interval between the moment of death and the moment of disappearance may be filled with the bloom of feeling; and then the thoughts, instead of going downward into the damp, cold ground, go upwards towards the clear blue of the skies, where the last trace has disappeared.

Shall it be counted a small thing either that now, after the new process of transmutation has been gone through, the remains of our dead are, if we choose, still with us in our homes? We may leave them in gardens, as now, if we prefer, preserving our cemeteries as they are, with the exception of the long mounds, and thus give permanence to the homes of the dead; but we may also carry them with us when we

go away to live in other States, and so keep up the tradition of the ancestral line wherever our lot may be cast. To leave our dead behind us is often painful. To return alone from foreign lands where they have died among strangers, resigning them to a strange soil, causes in most persons a sharp pang. That which gives a sense of permanency to the home, is the association of ancestral memories with it. The home is where the household gods are: the pictures, images, emblems, relics, urns, which bring tender recollections close, and are the best substitute for the visible persons themselves. We are more ready to go where fortune leads when all we have loved goes with us; and the new abode is relieved of much of its crudeness by the presence in it of all the past there is. In a New World like ours, where change of residence must be the rule, and examples of fixed homes for generations are rare, this consideration is not wanting in weight. We need to keep with us all our sanctities in order that our minds may not be dissipated and our hearts frittered away by the variety of local associations. One may be indifferent as to the spot where his own remains are laid, but few are indifferent in regard to the spot where repose the remains of their friends. It may be very unreasonable to care what becomes of these; but it is very usual, and will be for generations to come; and, taking things as they are, it should be a ground

of congratulation that a source of pain can be so easily removed.

But in the discussion of a subject like this such considerations, however interesting, are of secondary moment. The burden of the argument rests on the ground of sanitary science. Which usage best consults the well-being of living men; is most favorable to health, usefulness and happiness; is most consonant with a civilization that makes the satisfaction of humanity on the globe its care? These are the questions, and these questions, it would seem, can be answered only in one way. All the danger attends the custom of interment; all the danger is avoided by the custom of cremation. This cardinal point made, incidental points will arrange themselves. A practice essentially beneficial will prove to be at last in all respects beneficial. Objections will be removed one by one; means will be discovered of evading the most formidable difficulties; changes for the better in many adjacent departments will accompany the one radical change.

The strongest argument against burning the dead is that the process will immediately destroy all trace of guilt in cases where death has been caused by poison. If it be true, as is asserted, that, as a rule, but one body in 27,800 is exhumed for the purpose of detecting crime, and that the evidence in every such case has been doubtful and conflicting, or, from some other cir-

cumstance untrustworthy, this objection loses much of its force. It is suggested that cases of poisoning would quickly multiply as the chances of detection diminished. But is it likely that criminals of that kind are ever deterred from crime by the risk of disinterment and consequent discovery? If they are, here is, indeed, a point to be guarded; and how it may be guarded does not appear. But that it can be, who doubts, that is acquainted with the resources of modern vigilance? Additional security before the disposal of the body must prevent the need of after examination. For the rest, we can believe that in time, and in a comparatively short time, the current of feeling will flow into the new channel, so that men will wonder they could ever have flowed in any other; sentimental repugnances will be overcome; the novelty will be instituted, and will collect reverences upon it as all institutions do, and the practice that is based on utility will be sanctioned by poetry and adorned by art.

Nobody expects that such a change will be effected in a day. It must come gradually, and by slow degrees. The proposition will be met by every species of objection; it will be laughed at, and it will be scoffed at. Some will argue, some will complain, some will denounce. Some will cry "nonsense," and some will cry "danger," and some will cry

"blasphemy." The ignorant and superstitious will lift up their hands in horror; pious people will exclaim; sentimental people will grieve. To attempt an alteration in the language of a religious creed, or in the shape of a religious ceremony, is arduous and audacious. But such difficulties, if they occur, should operate as stimulants—not as discouragements. This is precisely the task that rationalists contemplate. This is our task. It may be long and hard and seemingly hopeless; but it is what we have undertaken. Week by week, day by day, in public speech and private conversation we assail the ancient creed, pushing our mining operations close up to its foundation-walls, and directing against its towers the full force of trained and furnished minds. So far as any practice is founded on prejudice, and perpetuated as an outgrowth of theological belief, loyalty to our own rational conviction prompts us to suspect it, and, when in any way noxious, to assail and remove it. Each time this is done, ancient foundations are shaken. If it is done in a wise temper, friendly to truth and sympathetic with good, the old foundations will give place to new ones capable of sustaining a nobler structure. The practice of interment has been intimately associated with beliefs that we repudiate as superstitions. We need not, however, assume that it is identified with them. The practice of burning

the dead can be reconciled with any creed; no faith need be shocked by it. If Jews can favor it—as it appears they are doing in Berlin—if a bishop of the Church of England detects no mischief in it, we need be in no haste to assume that Christian sects will offer serious opposition. The reform concerns us as men—not as believers in any particular dogma.

Still, as far as may be, prejudices must be humored. Tasks like this should be undertaken reverently. Let no natural feeling be lacerated; let violence be done to no decent sanctity. The change proposed touches men in their most sensitive part; it is wise to preserve as much as truth and goodness justify, for it will all be needed to give to the new usage dignity and grace.

GOODNESS AND HAPPINESS

A

SERMON

BY

O. B. FROTHINGHAM,

PREACHED IN

LYRIC HALL,

SIXTH AVENUE BETWEEN FORTY-FIRST AND FORTY-SECOND STS.

October 18th, 1874.

NEW YORK:
D. G. FRANCIS, 17 ASTOR PLACE.
1874.

GOODNESS AND HAPPINESS.

Wisdom is described in the Hebrew Book of Proverbs as holding in her right hand length of days, and in her left hand riches and honor; in one hand long life, in the other happy life. She is said to be more precious than rubies, and beyond comparison with all desirable things. She is "the delight of God himself," always rejoicing before him. She is the cause of rejoicing in all the habitable parts of the earth, and brings "delight to the sons of men." This is strong language, but no stronger than is found in all sacred writings. In fact, religious books of all time and of every race associate goodness with happiness in closest bonds, declaring, as a first principle, that they are inseparable all over the globe. "Like a beautiful flower full of color and fragrance are the fine and fruitful words of him who acts accordingly." So says, along with other sayings as beautiful, too many to be quoted, the ancient Hindoo book, the "Path of Virtue." Taking such statements all together, we find indicated three stages of intimacy between happiness

and goodness: First, that in which happiness is virtue's reward, if not in this world, then in another; second, that in which virtue and happiness are inseparable one from the other, as the shadow from the man; and, third, that in which happiness is the end of virtue, felicity the measure of worth, bliss the proof and glorification of goodness. "Let us live happily, not hating those that hate us! Let us live happily, though we call nothing our own! We shall be like the bright gods, feeding on happiness!" Secular literature takes up the same strain. It is the burden of fiction and of drama; in fact, there is something in the human mind, a sense of justice, a feeling of right, that compels men to believe that if they will be good they will be happy.

The course of life does not seem to justify the prophecy. While the common conscience attests the brotherhood of virtue and happiness, common observation denies it. While it will scarcely be affirmed that the bad are happy, it is constantly affirmed that the good are unhappy. The saints and heroes, the prophets and sages, go through the world mourning. They have trials of cruel mockings and scourgings, of bonds and imprisonment. They wander about in sheepskins and goatskins, in deserts, mountains, caves and dens of the earth, destitute, afflicted, tormented. The better they were, the more miserable

their condition. Moses, for his goodness, an exile; Elijah, for his goodness, hunted like a beast by a wicked queen; Jesus, for his goodness, crucified; Paul, for his goodness, scourged and beheaded; John, for his goodness, plunged into burning oil; Socrates, for his goodness, compelled to drink hemlock; Bishop Latimer, for his goodness, burned at the stake; Sir Thomas More, for his goodness, beheaded; Wm. Lloyd Garrison, for his goodness, dragged through Boston streets with a rope round his neck; Mazzini, for his goodness, driven from refuge to refuge with a price on his head; Lincoln, for his goodness, made sorrowful by the friends of liberty, and then murdered by its foes; the line runs on through every department of life. The high-minded politician, it is continually repeated, must resign hopes of public applause; the honest office-holder must not expect promotion; the man who tells the plain truth, deals with perfect uprightness in all his business relations, lives according to the Golden Rule, will miss the fortune. Happiness, in the general estimation, is a thing of *hap*, something that *happens:* not the result of law, not the outcome of order, righteousness, love, but a chance effect, which comes by the way, and is oftenest caught by those who go out of the way; and, very often, indeed, by those who walk in crooked ways. So general is this impression, and so clearly defined, that

in the vulgar apprehension goodness and happiness are completely dissociated. Religion itself teaches that good men must not look to be happy in this world, must disabuse themselves of the notion that goodness and happiness belong together in the order of things, and must make up their minds to give up what the world calls happiness, comfort, peace, pleasure, enjoyment, the sweets of friendship, the privileges of society, and lead austere lives in hope that, one of these days, when this world shall have passed away and another sphere of being shall have brought new conditions of existence, beatitude will come. In teaching thus, religion simply denies that goodness and happiness grow on the one stem, and virtually says to the doubters and disbelievers in another life that goodness will not bring them happiness, and that if they insist on being happy they need not expect to be good: a fatal admission, truly, in a world where happiness possesses all the outward attraction.

In reaching some intelligent conclusion on this matter, definitions are important. What is it to be good? What is it to be happy? If by goodness be meant austerity, self-denial, renunciation of desire, crucifixion of passion, the narrow, sour temper, or even the strict, colorless, odorless, toneless disposition of the ascetic; if by goodness be meant the scrupu-

lous regard for conventional duty, the rigid observance of technical rules, the straight and narrow walk of the Catholic devotee, or the New England Puritan, a walk as between two high walls that may not be overleaped or overlooked to get at the flowers and fruits on the other side—and something like this is the conception of goodness with ordinary people—it stands in reason that it cannot bring happiness. It starts by despising happiness; happiness is the very thing it fears; happiness is the very thing it avoids; if it thought that happiness would be its natural product, it would suspect itself; it would discover the tempter beneath its own garment; that goodness brought happiness would be reason enough for doubting whether it was goodness. Exuberant health, relish for natural pleasure, the delights of love, the joys of social intercourse, are forbidden.

Or if, again, by goodness be meant the possession of some transcendent perfection, a state of moral delicacy, a condition of disinterestedness, purity, delicate spiritual sensibility far above the best average level, a super-exalted height of excellence which separates one from his kind, this is inconsistent with happiness. The good man after this type must suffer all the time from a sense of his own deficiencies, from contact with daily coarseness, from wounded feelings, from the pain of excessive conscientiousness. He lives in a

world so unreal, that to breathe there with comfort is impossible.

Or, once more, if by goodness be meant an aggressive virtue that sets itself at issue with the world, makes it a business to denounce its vices, expose its abuses, avenge its wrongs, straighten out its crooked ways, happiness may hardly be expected from that. The professional or habitual reformer is not likely to be a happy man. Happiness is not compatible with a life of warfare, an atmosphere of hate, an experience of human bestiality, the perpetual rub and friction of the agitator or the philanthropist. To sleep in armor on the cold ground, to feel daily surrounded by foes, is not happiness. The reformer may have something better than happiness, the ecstasy of his own moral exaltation, the rapture of the embattled conscience, the joy of a passionate hope, the thrilling delight of high endeavor. Jesus spoke of his joy; Paul was carried at times beyond himself into the seventh heaven of transport; Latimer and Ridley smiled and congratulated each other at the stake; the sunshine never left the chambers of Mazzini's heart; the angels never ceased their singing in the breast of Garrison and his mates. They who thus wait on the Lord, mount up with wings like eagles, run and are not weary, walk and are not faint. But this is not happiness. Jesus was not happy; neither was Paul;

neither was ever heroic reformer or devoted soldier in a wicked world. The goodness of such, while it gives them a feeling of intimacy with divine beings, takes them out of intimacy with human beings, and it is on sympathy with human beings that happiness depends. The goodness that brings happiness is made up of qualities that satisfy human conditions and furnish to human nature its daily food, qualities of kindness, sweetness, obligingness, faithfulness, bountifulness, simplicity of heart, that fill in and fill out human relations. Happiness is a sober quiet spirit, domestic, social, that loves the ground, and delights in everyday realities, and clings closely to the humble affections that gladden men and women in their common walk.

I have in mind, this moment, a living man, who in quite an ideal way meets these requirements. He is old now, upwards of eighty. In his long career he has touched many men at many points; he has been in public life; has taken an active part in politics and reform; in the days of slavery he was an abolitionist; he has been a radical thinker on subjects of religion, and a radical doer in matters of society: but in whatever he thought and did he was so moderate, temperate and even; he kept so close to all his kind; he cultivated so diligently the virtues of generosity and charity; there was in his disposition so much of

sweet reasonableness; he was so loving and hospitable, and friendly with all sorts of people, so free from affectation and pretence, so devoid of the spirit of the pharisee, that his level seemed that of the better sort of men, though it was infinitely higher than the vulgar average. Were I asked to point out a happy man, I should point without hesitation to him. He is happy in his home, happy in his friends, happy in his social position, happy in the esteem and love of many people, happy in his circumstances, and happy in his mind. His happiness is due, no doubt, in very great measure, to his wonderful health, which, however, he took care to preserve by rational habits of life, to the affluence of his fortune, which he held as a trust for the benefit of his fellow-men, and to the quiet of a good conscience which he endeavored not to lose. These three things, good health, pecuniary competence, and an approving conscience, are elements of happiness that cannot well be dispensed with. No one can be reasonably happy who suffers from rheumatism or dyspepsia, who is at a loss for his dinner, or who is in constant fear lest some iniquity will be found out, and bring him to grief. These three ingredients the man I speak of possessed. But over and above this, there was a disciplined thoughtfulness and consideration for others, a cultivated honesty, a trained humanity such as belong only to great souls.

In the virtue there was hardly a flaw; in the happiness there was no flaw at all. What he might have been, had he suffered from constitutional infirmity, or from obstinate poverty, none can venture to tell. Certain it is, that his goodness, though of a very high order, was married to a rare felicity. And his goodness consisted in an exact conformity with the material and social conditions of rational life in so far as he understood them. That was all. He obeyed law gladly; without hating and shunning the world, without straining himself up beyond the world, but honoring the world, loving it, getting the utmost of satisfaction out of it, believing it to be richer in satisfaction of all kinds than anybody knew, accepting frankly the obligation of charity and duty as opportunities for arriving at treasures which were concealed from the multitude of men, he opened as many windows for sunlight and as many doors for sympathy as he could. This is goodness, broad, rich, comprehensive, sufficient.

Now, what is happiness? It cannot be pleasure; for pleasure is merely the passing excitement of the senses. The indulgence of appetite gives pleasure, which ceases when appetite is surfeited. A fortunate turn of affairs gives pleasure; a bright day, a merry occasion, a drive in the country, a walk in the park, a ride on horseback, an agreeable journey, give

pleasure; an unexpected meeting with friends, a warm greeting, a word of praise, give pleasure. But all these are transient: they pass, and leave but a shadowy trace. They imply no deep hold on human regard, no close association with human interests. Some of them are accompanied by bitter pain; some are followed by disease or decrepitude, by sorrow or remorse. Men of pleasure pay for moments of ecstasy by hours of ennui, and often by years of agony. Pleasure is an incident in life; it is the champagne and ortolan, not the roast-beef and beer. Without it life would be tasteless, but with nothing else it would be insipid too. Men talk of lives of pleasure. A life of pleasure is inconceivable. Days of pleasure are possible; years of pleasure are not past dreaming of: but what is called a *life* of pleasure is a wilderness with a few delicious oases amid vast reaches of sand; it is a life of reactions and depressions, of fatigues and languors, of unsatisfied wishes, barren memories, and illusory dreams. To speak of a life of happiness is reasonable: but one might as reasonably speak of a sunshine of fireworks as of a life of pleasure.

The derivation of the word "happiness," hap, happen, happenness, suggests that it is a matter of luck. The happy man is the lucky man, with whom affairs "turn out well." "Happy-go-lucky" is the phrase. He is a Micawber or a Seller, perhaps, whose

luck never comes, but who is so certain it will that it is quite the same as if it did; a chance combination of circumstances may bring it at any moment. Happiness of this sort has nothing to do with goodness. In fact, the happiest man, according to this idea, may be the man who throws all goodness overboard, as endangering the safety of the ship and interfering with that perfect play of the wits which is necessary for seizing opportunities. The happy man, on this theory, is a Skimpole. Unfortunately for him and his kind, the fortune does not turn up, the millions are not in the little venture that twinkles before his eye. Happiness does not happen: it comes on conditions; it no more "turns up" than honesty does, or industry, or faithfulness, or respect for one's word.

What if we define happiness as the bright result of harmony of conditions? I spoke of three of these conditions—health, a competency, and a good conscience. But none of these *occur*. Constitutions do not take care of themselves. If given originally, they are preserved at the expense of incessant care. If not given originally, no fortunate chances will obtain them. The exquisite boon of health is a treasure that an unhappy moment may take away. Whoever has had health and lost it, bitterly knows the cost of recovering the prize; whoever, never having been blessed

with it, strives to gain it, is sure that no price would be too great to pay for the acquisition.

Does competency come by chance? It sometimes seems so, as we follow the fortunes of Wall Street. But the millions of working-people of all descriptions who create the solid wealth of the world, bear witness, plaintively enough often, to the difficulty of satisfying their moderate desires with all the industry, forethought, sagacity, thrift, they can practise; a careless day may mean ruin.

A good conscience is no gift, but an achievement of the most difficult kind. With the best advantages, the most favorable opportunities, to preserve in active life a conscience void of offence befalls by accident nobody. As years go on, and life gets complicated, and temptations multiply, and chances for ill-doing occur, and the boundary-line between right and wrong, at first so clear and broad and deeply cut, narrows and fades, and across the low bordering-wall which in youth looked higher than a man's head and stronger than granite, tricksy spirits of chicane and casuistry skip and play. The truth is brought home, often in bitter sorrow and shame, that a white conscience is no heaven-bestowed treasure which a divinity confers and angels keep, but a fair shield which only the utmost care will keep free from blood-stains and undimmed by battle-dust in the terrible conflicts that

must be passed through; and if that deepest cause of unhappiness is averted, it is by a watchfulness that never slumbers and a fortitude that never flinches. Scarcely does the most ephemeral felicity come by chance: even that is conditioned by the austere law of cause and effect. And as for the abiding happiness which lasts through summer and winter, the law that secures that is a law to which men give awful names of duty and responsibility.

Happiness is that which happens! But nothing happens. Through seeming chance flits, in full view to men of our generation, the determining spirit, and the time will come when the dominion that has been for centuries abandoned to luck will be acknowledged as the peculiar realm of foreseeing and predestinating causes. The time is passed when a controlling Providence was seen in signal occurrences alone. To us it has been revealed that we live in a world of law. The dewdrop trembles in obedience to law. The sunbeam traverses its millions of miles from the central orb to our planet, in the unseen grooves of law. The network is so fine that not a piece of gossamer can find its way through the meshes. The hummingbird owes the glitter of its topaz crest to the effort to meet every possible condition of its ephemeral existence. That so many thriftless, shiftless people have happy days, is a tribute to the immense resources of

circumstance, and to the elasticity with which the belts of law accommodate themselves to the whirling wheels of existence. But that in all the whizzing and whirling as much mishap occurs as hap, is a fact too clearly obvious to be doubted. The truth is, that happiness requires as nice an adjustment of persons to conditions as goodness does—if anything, a nicer adjustment; for happiness implies the utmost finish and polish of machinery. Happiness is the last touch of grace given to virtue: it is the shine that goodness takes on at its best.

Let us admit, cordially, that happiness depends on circumstances. Is the worth of it lessened? Is the art of it simplified? None but a skilful chemist can so combine his gases that the dull vapors will give out glorious illuminations. Happiness is an art. To make circumstances so combine that from their combination loveliness shall ensue, requires something more than the fortunate accident. If goodness be a science, happiness is the art that corresponds with it. The happiness of nature in the splendor of a summer-day is due to the perfect consent of all the elements—light, air, temperature, atmospheric softness. All things feel an influence of peace; there is no jar; the cattle seem conscious of the sweet graciousness of the time. The trees murmur gently. The farmer speaks low to his oxen. The grass and flowers are still, from

the fullness of their satisfaction. A spell is on the landscape. It is as if there were a truce among the elements, which may be broken by the lightest disturbance of the wonderful equilibrium.

"'Tis one of the charmed days
When the genius of God doth flow;
The wind may alter twenty ways,
A tempest cannot blow:
It may blow north, it still is warm;
Or south, it still is clear;
Or east, it smells like a clover farm;
Or west, no thunder fear."

In such days heaven seems to come to earth, and earth is happy in being heaven. The happiness of insect and bird is the result of a perfect satisfaction with their outward condition. They have food enough and shelter. There are no sportsmen about. They are in no fear of the enemies of their kind. The happiness of childhood results from absolute freedom of anxiety in regard to the daily regulation of its existence. If it feels no pain, suffers from no hunger, is unconstrained in its motions, it is happy. A happy boyhood or girlhood is one that is free from irksomeness and friction. Circumstances are easy and natural. Home is reasonably comfortable; parents are reasonably kind; study and play are fairly balanced;

tutoring is not excessive; training is not overdone; studies are adapted to intelligence; church-going and reading of the Bible are not pushed to fanaticism; the sunday-school is not all catechism; the child is allowed to understand and think as a child, to have a child's tastes and interests; the happy child is amiable and kind.

The happy marriage is one in which the two married people are fitted to each other, and are so circumstanced that their mutual fitness is unbroken. It is not necessary that they should be in full health, for if they belong to each other the care of the weaker by the stronger welds them closer together. Dependence answers to protection. It is not necessary that they should be rich; it is better that they should not be; so long as absolute deprivation of things needful is not felt, the practice of economy, the effort to make the ends meet, the exercise of choice in regard to the things to be afforded and the things to be renounced, the little acts of resignation which they perform, each studying the other's comfort, the daily sacrifices of convenience and indulgence cement the union. Let there be a community of tastes, a conformity of dispositions, an agreement in aims and purposes, and the chief conditions are met. That there are many unhappy marriages in our generation, no one will question. There are more, perhaps, than

there used to be. The freedom of individuals in our modern civilization, the consequent restlessness under constraint, the disregard of conventional rules and traditions, the legitimation of impulse, the sanctification of passion, the postponement of the old-fashioned notions of duty to the claims of natural feeling, will easily account for it. The fault is not in the conditions of marriage, so much as in the failure to observe them, in the entire neglect of them. There are those who think, or affect to think, that marriage insures compliance with its own conditions, so that they who enter its estate find themselves, by the necessity of the situation, adjusted to each other. But this is by no means the case. Our grandfathers and grandmothers understood this well, and took every conceivable precaution to insure the fitness of the match before the relation was acknowledged. The two must be mated first, married afterwards. The Christian church, Romanist and Protestant, exerted its authority and influence, in its best days, to the same effect. And similar care must be taken again, if unhappy marriages are to be less frequent than they are. The most favorable conditions to the outward view, health, opulence, even amiability of disposition, are no advantage unless this point be satisfied. Even natural goodness will avail little without this fitness. People of great natural sweetness become

soured by an incessant friction from which there is no escape. They cannot act themselves; they cannot show what they are. Their good points are not displayed. Their best qualities, instead of being encouraged and fostered, are crossed and thwarted. They were married before they were mated, and mating after marriage cannot be relied on. A fortunate conjunction of persons satisfies, as a rule, the conditions of happiness, and of goodness too. An unfortunate conjunction of persons will cause unhappiness under any ordinary circumstances, and will be fatal to goodness also. No impulse however warm, no attraction however passionate, no fancied sympathy however absorbing, will take the place of that actual consent of disposition, that real correspondence of mind, that close agreement of organization that guarantees against the wear and tear, the frictions and agitations of years. So long as the laws of temperament are neglected, so long as the physiological laws are disobeyed, so long as questions which will inevitably be raised, sooner or later, are permitted to go unasked, there will be unhappy marriages, unblest by virtue as well as uncrowned by felicity.

For goodness and happiness go together. They are, in fact, the same thing viewed on different sides. They are different faces of the same shield. Both are simply conformity with the actual conditions and

facts of life. Goodness is that conformity looked at under its grave aspect, happiness is that conformity looked at under the aspect of gladness. Goodness is the name we give to this conformity in the shape of duty, obligation, denial, acquiescence, renunciation, disinterestedness; happiness is the name we give to the conformity in the shape of ease, repose, smoothness, gratification of desire, fulfillment of wishes. They are one and the same in substance, different in semblance only. The good man must be the happy man; if he is not happy, he is not good. The man who goes about with a sad countenance, a wrinkled forehead, downcast eyes, a long-drawn mouth, an aspect that seems to convey a standing reproach to the world, is not a good man. He may be pious in the ordinary sense, a church member—an evangelical Christian; he may be bountiful with his means to the poor, sternly upright in business, a faithful husband, a conscientious parent, a citizen of worth; but, if he is unhappy, he is not good. There are vital conditions he has not met; there are essential laws he has not obeyed; there is narrowness, bigotry, want of sympathy somewhere; in some part he is out of joint. It must be so, for happiness is the aroma of goodness, as the sweetness of the morning is the result of the divine chemistry that tempers the creation. Happiness is the test of virtue. The religion that does not make

people happy is condemned, for it puts them out of concurrence with the powers of life, instead of putting them in. It is the business of religion to establish harmonious intercourse between rational beings and a rational world. If it does that, and according to the degree of its success, it fills men's hearts with peace and crowds their being with praise; it sets the different orders of being to lovely tune, and makes them chant the beauty of the divine love in all the ends of the earth. But if the saint who represents its best achievement hangs his head, puts on sepulchral raiment, glides through the world like a frightened ghost, sings *miserere* instead of *jubilate*, spends hours in penitential prayer, bewails the sinfulness of his bosom, and prays that he may escape the fires of hell, further inquisition into the merits of his religion may be dispensed with. He is not a holy person, because he is not a happy one. The angels of God do not complain. When paradise and pandemonium become convertible terms, unhappiness may be synonymous with virtue, not before.

And by an equal necessity, the happy man must be a good man; if he is not, he is not happy. To all appearance his felicity may be complete; his animal spirits may be high; his appetites for life keen; his friends many and kind; his days sunny; his nights blessed with quiet sleep. But if he is not good, if he

is unfaithful, unjust, ungracious, if he is arbitrary, harsh, mean, disobliging, discourteous, he is not deserving of so beautiful an appellation as happy. The secret of his unhappiness will probably one day be disclosed. Happy people are good; happy moments are holy moments. Even bad men, in their occasional hours of happiness, when, for an instant, a fortunate turn of affairs, an unexpected favor, a word or deed of unlooked-for kindness, a mood of love throws upon them its spell, become gentle, amiable, just, full of penitence, good-will, forgiveness. In such moments they have no enemies; their hearts are at peace.

Is it asked, then, which is primary and of first consideration—goodness or happiness? I answer: both are primary and of first consideration. Is it asked which should be aimed at as an end? I answer: whichever will best serve as end. Grave tempers, unblessed by sunlight, with low quality of spirits, sluggish desires, moral, literal, prosaic, naturally put goodness first. Quick, responsive temperaments, fresh in feeling, eager, expectant, full of vigor, are attracted by happiness. To the majority of mankind happiness is the more fascinating. Why not let the more fascinating be the object? The happy people are better than the unhappy. There will be a better chance of goodness if we aim at happiness than if we aim at goodness directly. The pursuit of happiness

has this advantage, that it keeps the glory always in view; and experience will make the glory steadier and nobler, will change the pursuit of happiness into the pursuit of felicity, the chase after butterflies into a search after beatitude. They who say that wisdom never contemplates happiness, make a great mistake. It is what wisdom contemplates all the time. It searches for all the causes of happiness. As the morning-stars sang together on the first day of creation, so the sons of God will sing together at the last. Eden was happy, says the old legend, till guile crept into it. The fall from innocence was a fall from bliss. With the return of smiles, innocence will return.

CHARITY AND THE POOR.

A

SERMON

BY

O. B. FROTHINGHAM,

PREACHED IN

LYRIC HALL,

SIXTH AVENUE BETWEEN FORTY-FIRST AND FORTY-SECOND STS.

November 29th, 1874.

NEW YORK:
D. G. FRANCIS, 17 ASTOR PLACE.

1874.

CHARITY AND THE POOR.

The subject of this discourse is Charity and the Poor. It is a subject of universal and permanent interest: of pressing interest on the edge of a winter that may be severe and is certain to be commercially dull and therefore hard to the unemployed and helpless, but of profound interest at every season. It is one of the subjects that concern society itself in its very constitution, and should be studied rationally, when feelings of compassion are not excited, as they are now. But the hour of discussion is appointed, not chosen. It is idle to speak when none will listen, and it is difficult to speak reasonably when the listeners are under the influence of emotion. Two kinds of appeal are addressed to the public. On one hand, we are urged, in the name of gospel charity, to give to the poor out of such plenty as we have, and meet their wants by ungrudging bestowals of money, clothing, food, by opening soup-houses and dormitories, and by responding lavishly to the calls of the many charitable associations which take under their special

charge certain classes of the destitute; on the other hand, we are warned, in the name of wisdom, against giving recklessly, and so creating more poverty than we relieve. On the one hand our feeling, on the other our good sense is plied with moving considerations, and between the two little to the purpose will be done. The problem of poverty is too serious to be thus loosely dealt with. The interests of society are too grave to be put at the mercy of a chance impulse or a half-enlightened policy. It is time that a matter of this magnitude should be dealt with on some fixed intelligent principle.

Two methods of treating poverty practically are suggested—the method of the New Testament, and the method of social science; the former has been in operation for a great many hundred years, and is generally favored still in the high places of society: the latter is new, has but few intelligent advocates, is regarded with general disfavor, is spoken of harshly by those who do not understand it, and has not yet been adopted on any scale sufficiently broad to exhibit its peculiarity. But, as I am persuaded, it is from this latter method that light and help are to come.

The New Testament idea of poverty and its treatment is indicated in a few sentences which convey its whole scope, and in language that admits of no misunderstanding. Such passages as the following need

no interpretation. In the beatitudes of Luke, by many believed to be the original ones, the kingdom of heaven is promised to the poor. "Blessed be ye poor; for yours is the kingdom of God." "Woe unto you that are rich; for ye have received your consolation." "Blessed are ye that hunger now; for ye shall be filled. Woe unto you that are full; for ye shall hunger." "Sell that ye have, and give alms," is a bidding given by Jesus to his disciples. To the rich young man who asked the way to the eternal life, the master says: "If thou wilt be perfect, sell that thou hast, and give to the poor; and thou shalt have treasure in heaven." And when the beautiful youth turns sadly away, unable to comply with so severe a condition, Jesus says: "How hardly shall they that have riches enter into the kingdom of heaven." "Hath not God chosen the poor of this world rich in faith and heirs of the kingdom, which he hath promised to them that love him?" writes James, the brother of Jesus, in the very spirit of the words just quoted. The parable of Dives and Lazarus conveys the same lesson that these passages inculcate. Dives is a rich man, who is clothed in purple and fine linen, and fares sumptuously every day; Lazarus is a poor man, who lies a beggar at his gate. The characters of the two are inferred from their condition. Dives is an outcast from heaven because he is rich, and when he

dies goes directly to the place of torment. Lazarus is enrolled among the elect because he is poor, and, dying, is received at once in Abraham's bosom. One in his lifetime has his good things, dresses richly and dines plentifully, has servants and establishment; the other has his good things in the lifetime that follows. This is the gospel teaching on the subject of poverty, the only definite gospel teaching there is: and it justifies us in saying that in the New Testament poverty is regarded as a privileged estate; the poor are accounted a favored class; the duty of the rich, as defined, is to give a tenth part of their wealth to the poor, at any rate, as ordinary benefaction, while they that aim at higher attainment will give it all away and become poor themselves. The permanency of poverty, as a providential institution, is assumed by Jesus and the Evangelists without argument; "the poor ye have always with you." There is nowhere in the New Testament an intimation, prophecy, or glimmer of hope that poverty may, at some future day, pass away, or even that it may be in any degree alleviated while the world lasts. No suggestion is made looking towards its prevention or its diminution by scientific treatment. No hint is given of its depressing, demoralizing, dehumanizing influence. That it is incompatible with a well-organized society would never be guessed by a diligent reader of the gospels.

But one method of dealing with it is proposed—the method of almsgiving; and this method, instead of being accepted as the best possible under the circumstances, is soberly and earnestly commended as being even more beneficial to the rich than to the poor; for while it alleviates merely the physical sufferings of the poor, it procures for the rich places in the heavenly kingdom, and thus becomes directly a means of salvation to them.

This view of poverty, and of the mode of relieving it, was bequeathed by the early church to the later. It was the view practically adopted by Western Christendom. It was the view on which the charities of Christendom were organized. From it sprung the asylums, retreats, refuges, religious houses for men and women, monasteries, nunneries, the innumerable endowments for the care of humanity in every stage and kind of infirmity. When this system was at its height of popularity it was customary for those who aspired to spiritual perfection to renounce their wealth, assume the garb and condition of mendicancy, and go begging from town to town. Distinguished men took on themselves the vow of poverty, making it a religious duty to call nothing their own, to engage in no industry by which property might be acquired, and to consume no more than their actual necessities demanded. In fact, for a time, the order of society was,

as far as could be, reversed. The rich were taught to live for the benefit of the poor. The poor were the kings, patrons, and benefactors, the beloved of God, as the phrase "Christ's poor" expresses. The fruits of this system are still manifest all over Europe, but especially in Italy, the country where it held the longest and the most complete sway. That terrible fact, pauperism, poverty accepted, chronic, established, instituted, the danger of society, the despair of philanthropy, is the legitimate fruit of it.

Emerging from the Middle Ages, encumbered with the ruins of the feudal system, the modern era of industry found itself hampered with this portentous relic; a thing foreign to its own genius, obstructing to its own activity, and out of the reach of its arm. To say that pauperism is incidental to an industrial age is, to speak mildly, a great mistake. The industrial ages have been steadily trying to get the mastery of it, so as to abolish it. It was the product of a state of society to which the new age was at every point opposed, but out of which the new age was slowly and painfully developed. The modern world found pauperism ready made to its hand, and had to face it as it could. To meet such a phenomenon effectively, was impossible: there were no implements; there was no knowledge; there was no grasp of the problem. The system that created pauperism, created likewise

the arguments that supported and the feelings that justified it, and discouraged all others. The new age could therefore only grapple in the dark with its ugly foe. The thousands of helpless poor who had been fed, housed, nursed, kept in a condition of deplorable preservation till they were literally deprived of all self-asserting ability, were flung in a mass upon communities that were struggling into new life, and to keep the swarming nest of monsters at a distance was all that could be thought of. Even yet the combat is not ended, though victory may be anticipated as the result of a social system that aims at giving everybody employment, and thus at making everybody self-maintaining and comfortable.

The successive poor-laws of England were framed, less as deliberately-conceived measures for taking care of the poor, than as defensive measures against the intolerable evils of pauperism engendered by the old Christian *régime*. In the early periods of the Reformation, laws of the severest kind were enacted to suppress the appalling mischief. Intense indignation was excited against able-bodied people who preferred beggary to work. As far back as the fourteenth century, five hundred years ago, statutes were passed decreeing that if such persons were detected applying for relief when work was to be had, they were for the first offence to be whipped, for the second to have their

ears cropped, and for the third to be hung as enemies of the commonwealth. This, it will be observed, was before the much-abused industrial age had attained maturity or brought forth characteristic fruits. Every reign, from that of Richard II. to that of Victoria, was marked by fresh efforts to get control of this gigantic nuisance. They were but partially successful; wholly successful they could not be, because the new industrial age did not fully comprehend itself. It was still hampered by the old theories, still haunted by the old traditions, still possessed by the old fancies. It was not prepared utterly to discard what it had received as a legacy. It felt that pauperism was its enemy, but was not prepared to strike a blow directly at its heart. It knew it was a viper, yet held it to its bosom.

I affirm my belief, without the least qualification, that whatever improvement has been made in the condition of the poor has been achieved, not in spite of material industries, but by virtue of them, as a direct consequence of the agencies they set in motion. The condition of the poor, even in the most favored countries of the modern world, is bad enough, but it is vastly better than it used to be, and that it is better must be attributed to commerce, agriculture, manufactures, and the numerous practical sciences and arts that these have set in operation. When we call

tenement-houses the disgrace of modern civilization, we must bear in mind the noisome holes in which poverty, in other days, made itself the companion of reptiles and swine; and when we cry out against under-ground cellars as places unfit for the lodging of human beings, we must not forget the dens which did not constitute even the meanest part of any architectural structure, where, in the "ages of faith," the candidates of the kingdom rotted in filth. These tenements and cellars are not the answer that civilization gives to the question poverty raises; they are simply the best answer it can give *under circumstances not of its own creating.* For the worst features of that miserable condi ion, other ages and systems and theories are responsible. For whatever is good and hopeful in it, the new ages of industry deserve all the credit.

One thing may safely be said: that the method of the Middle Ages, of the Christian church, of the New Testament, has increased and established poverty, and made it, as it were, an institution on the earth. All do not regard this as a ground of reproach against the system: the good Romanist does not; the consistent evangelical Protestant, if such a person exists, does not; for in the regards of both Romanist and Protestant the state of men in this life is of small moment as compared to their future destiny. The

Romanist, with unquestioning confidence, accepts the practice of his church; the Protestant quotes the New Testament, and takes the consequences; but every rational thinker, every student of social conditions, every friend of social progress for its own sake, does, and sees no safety for the future save in a frank and utter repudiation of the system that has wrought such disastrous effects on humanity.

It is the sober conviction of wise minds and kind hearts now that the system above described should be practically abandoned at the earliest moment, and that the new system should be adopted in its stead. Let almsgiving, they say, be stopped short; let poverty be discouraged and shamed. Let it be assumed as a first principle that pauperism has no rightful place in modern society; that poverty is an evil, and a removable one; that the poor are to be stimulated, not drugged; to be made independent of aid; to be put on their mettle, and rescued from the imbecility into which compassion and almsgiving have sunk them. Almsgiving—the bestowal of money, food, clothing—out of an undiscriminating compassion, with no equivalent rendered, and no inability to work evident, is pronounced a crime as well as a blunder, an offence against the community and the mendicant as well. In the reign of Henry VIII., of England, a law was passed that whoever dispensed charity

privately, and not through authorized associations, rendered himself liable to a penalty equal to ten times the amount given away. There are some among ourselves who would not be sorry to see such a law reenacted, so deep is their conviction that the method of almsgiving is fatal to any substantial improvement in the condition of the poor.

If the poor must be aided—as they must be at present, and will need to be for generations yet, for the permanent causes of poverty will not disappear in many days, and incidental causes will recur so long as the industrial world is exposed to disturbance from panics and failures—the aid should be dispensed by responsible people, acting in concert, in well-considered and thoroughly-organized fashion. Charitable societies exist in sufficient number and variety of purpose to meet every exigency. No class of people, no species of want, is unprovided for. In fact, wants are invented in order that they may be provided for. At the thanksgiving season, when the charitable associations present their claims, one is surprised at the amount of effort that is expended in relieving human want. It is no difficult task to satisfy oneself in regard to the respective merits of these societies and decide which of them answers to the particular phase of necessity in which he is interested. By doing that, and then by making such

society as one has confidence in the depository of all the charity he has to bestow, his duty will be fully discharged, the chances of imposition will be reduced to the smallest point, the best economy will be secured, and real needs will be served in serviceable fashion. It is my firm belief that if charitable persons would make it an inflexible rule never to give alms, but to entrust their benefaction, of whatever kind it may be, to some well-conducted society, whose operations are open to inspection, and whose servants are worthy of confidence, the benefit to the poor, as well as to the community at large, would be incalculable. If no single society covers every demand, then contribute to two, or three, or even more—to as many as will, collectively, meet the requirement; but let the supplies be given to these; make them the almoners, under the public eye; work with their machinery, and in no other way, unless under circumstances that render your personal interference entirely safe.

Let no effort be spared to make organized associations wise, honest, and efficient. Let the best, and only the best, be countenanced. Withhold support entirely from such as pursue a false plan, or nurse an artificial need, or cherish sectarian or party purposes, or refuse to let in the full light of day on their proceedings, or cannot justify themselves by good

judgment and wise economy. The attempt made last winter to institute a Bureau of Charities, a charity clearing-house, for the simplifying and consolidation of beneficent work, revealed many things, and among other things this: that all societies, instituted ostensibly for the benefit of the poor, are not charitable societies; that some at least are sectarian societies bearing charitable names. The plan projected fell through because associations of this kind refused to allow their operations to be overlooked. The work of helping the poor is too serious to be done in the dark, no matter what church professes to do it; and no wise man will give the smallest aid or countenance to such. There are responsible bodies enough without wasting sympathy and resources on such as confess themselves not responsible to public sentiment. Could all such be abolished, and the work of ministering to the imperative wants of the poor be committed to one or two that can prove themselves to be worthy of support, the problem would be reduced to very manageable proportions. A single association, like that for "Improving the Condition of the Poor," ably officered, and heartily supplied with means, would be adequate to the care of the permanent or resident poverty of a great city, during an exceptionally hard winter, when the honest and industrious, who are needed there, must be sustained till better times return. Another,

equally well-appointed, might suffice for the vagrant poor, who will diminish in number when indiscriminate bounty is stopped. At present the work is in too many hands; it is unnecessarily subdivided; four or five times the amount of money is expended that the need requires, and a most preposterous proportion goes for office-hire and wages. The consequence is, a wicked waste of energy and resources, confusion in the public mind, division of counsel, imposition on the part of designing knaves, and a feeling of disgust in the minds of sensible people.

The method of almsgiving has been demonstrated to be mischievous and false. Its weakness is openly and loudly confessed. But it is an inveterate custom, sanctioned by the pious belief of many generations, and such customs are not easily discontinued. Nothing less than a determined effort made from a principle will loosen their hold on the unreflecting mind. It is so much easier to continue an old practice than to discontinue it, that mere habit will override anything less stubborn than conviction. People practise almsgiving who know it to be wrong; people defend it who know it to be irrational. Sentimental considera tions are brought in to justify what good sense and experience condemn. A glance at two or three of these excuses, for they cannot be called arguments, will sufficiently show the flimsiness of their substance.

Almsgiving, it is said, is made imperative by an unconquerable instinct, that commands us to pity and aid the suffering, and that instinct being part of human nature satisfies us in regard to the wisdom of its suggestions. It would be nearer the truth to say that almsgiving is dictated by an unreasoning impulse, born of tradition and usage, which is mistaken for an instinct solely because it is thoughtless. It is not nature but a habit that has become a second nature, against which nature needs all the more to reassert itself.

It is said, again, that almsgiving is necessary to bridge over the interval between the old system and the new, and make some sort of provision for the poor until a better method can be devised. But if a new method be advisable, why not try to find one? Why not follow up the small beginnings that have been made? Almsgiving belongs to the old system wholly; it has no part or lot in the new. And to go on practising it is simply postponing the inauguration of a better mode.

It is urged, further, that almsgiving is useful in keeping alive the benevolent affections, which otherwise would die from lack of exercise. If there were no way but this of keeping alive the benevolent affections, a doubt might be entertained of the wisdom of discontinuing so old and popular a school, for the

benevolent affections are a most important part of our nature. But when so many ways for doing good to the poor are open—the way of personal visitation, of private inspection and care, of organized social activity, of public effort after their physical and moral improvement, all so much more difficult and consequently so much more disciplinary than almsgiving, so much better calculated to mature and educate the benevolent affections—this argument lacks force. If the truth were told, the motive to almsgiving with the great majority of people would be confessed to be a wish to be rid of the poor on the easiest terms. The quality encouraged is not so much charitable feeling, as it is indolence, thoughtlessness, the disposition to satisfy conscience with a semblance of service, and to evade the sterner demands of duty. Almsgiving is the least expensive way of regarding the wants of poverty, and as being the least expensive is the most popular.

It is undoubtedly true that "some habitual association with the poor, the dependent, and the sorrowful is an indispensable source of the highest elements of character;" but such association most of us are, at one time or another, compelled to make, under circumstances that admit of no challenge. To make it, as a rule, with the poor of a great city is too difficult for general accomplishment. It would be well if, as

a working clergyman suggests, individuals would devote a portion of every day to the personal visitation of the poor in their neighborhood; but if any one thing is certain, it is that individuals will do nothing of the kind. It is useless to urge it. Other duties and engagements, the love of ease, the desire for rest, the dread of exhaustive and unpleasant tasks, render this mode of relieving poverty the most visionary of all.

We must take people as they are, not as they ought to be; and until a moral conviction, far more deep and controlling than exists in the community at present, can be begotten, it will be idle to expect the consecration that personal intercourse with the poor requires.

Besides, if all this could be controverted, there are other matters to be considered than the cultivation in ourselves of certain delicate elements of character. The interests of society are to be considered; the manhood of the poor themselves is to be considered; the need of judgment and system is to be considered; the importance to ourselves of rational views, and firm determinations, and a habit of regarding all large subjects in their broadest aspect is to be considered. Charitable feelings are precious, are worthy of all respect, deserve careful fostering and conscientious nursing; but they must not be allowed to interfere

with that larger development of mind on which the progress of mankind depends. God forbid there should be less love; God grant there may be more light. At present the demand for light is the more urgent. Not to love less, but to love wisely, is the need of the hour. Not a smaller supply of steam, but a larger supply of well-constructed engines, is the thing to be desired.

Poverty is to be abolished by a change in the social conditions that produce it. But this change cannot be effected in a day—cannot be effected at all by artificial means. The ideal arrangement of society is not to be anticipated. The process of evolution is slow; each phase must be passed through and exhausted before the next is reached. Projects for compressing into ten years the growth of a century always fail. Plans for manufacturing an immediate Eden are advertised, but the Eden does not appear. It is of no use to cut a channel before the water has reached your farm. Wait till the current flows, then open a way for it.

Some years ago a wealthy banker caused to be built, in different parts of London, rows of dwellings for the poor. His hope was, that people of the most moderate means, seeing their convenience, would desire to occupy them, would save out of their small earnings enough to pay the merely nominal rent, would acquire

habits of cleanliness and decency by living in them, would take better care of themselves and their families, and by degrees rise out of the condition of poverty. The design was to improve the estate of the poor, by opening a new and attractive way out of it. The plan was carefully considered, matured with all possible judgment, and animated with all possible good will. In a certain way it was successful, but not in the way anticipated. The persons for whom the buildings were intended would not take them. The currents of poverty set in other directions; and while respectable mechanics availed themselves of the opportunity to hire comfortable lodgings at small cost, no encouragement whatever was given to the belief that a model street or village would have the effect to make a model world. Money spent in anticipating wants is usually money wasted. The desirableness of having the wants felt is unquestionable; but if they are not felt, it is unwise to act as if they were.

Many years since, a rich capitalist, of Philadelphia, left an immense sum of money to build and endow an asylum where a great number of orphan boys could be sheltered, fed, clothed, taught, without expense. The author of this magnificent scheme for rescuing a regiment annually from destruction was a man of practical sagacity and benevolence; his early life had

taught him lessons of poverty; in his later life it had been his wont to devote a considerable part of his time to relieving the necessities of his kind. He was deeply impressed by the misery of orphanage among the poor, and it seemed to him that by snatching a portion yearly from their wretchedness, and keeping them within the reach of humanizing influences, the morass of pauperism might be gradually drained dry. The plan was well digested, and munificently carried out. The accommodations are used; there is no lack of boys willing to be clothed, fed, taught, and made respectable by being apprenticed to good trades. Yet thoughtful persons pronounce the institution a failure in respect to the ultimate purpose it was designed to serve. It is alleged that the establishment is a sumptuous asylum—that the boys there are simply removed from the world they were born into, and deprived of the natural discipline and education of circumstances; that their mode of life, their instruction, their training, are artificial; that they grow up to the age of eighteen in seclusion, wholly without knowledge of the world, and then are sent out into life unprepared to face the duties of any condition. An eminent lawyer assured me that the institution was regarded, by many of the best people, as a nuisance; that, as a solution of the problem of poverty, it was without value; and that it threw upon

society, every year, a number of lads whom it was harder to provide for than it was for the poor themselves.

Millions of money are spent yearly in endeavors to adjust circumstances to the Indian tribes, so that they will be happy, peaceful, and civilized; agencies are established, officials are paid, supplies of food are accumulated; implements of agriculture are furnished: but the impression made on the Indians is light, and the advance made towards a solution of the problem of their destiny is imperceptible. Granting that the utmost has been done that could have been done *under the circumstances*, that qualifying clause "under the circumstances" implying, as it does, that circumstances are adverse to the enterprise, that it is "against the grain," is a confession that a wrong method has been pursued. Things must be taken as they are, not as they are not; no ingenuity, no benevolence, no kindliness of intent, no device of philanthropy will discharge the function of those social laws which are commissioned to adjust the relations of mankind. The attempt to make men act beyond the measure of their attainment will ever end in failure. The philanthropist earnestly wishes it were otherwise, does what he can to make it otherwise; by hastening the progress of public opinion begets a desire that it may one of these days be otherwise; but he must use such

tools as are fashioned to his hand and must be patient if they break.

The fate of the poor is not thus in our hands; we are not in our own hands; all, rich and poor alike, are in the hands of that inscrutable Providence that works out its own plans, in its own way, and in its own time, and never delegates to mortals the power to drag its chariot beyond the allotted rate of speed. This Providence has allowed poverty ever since it has permitted man to dwell on the planet; has continued it in spite of all the endeavor of good men to abolish it; has made it a condition of social progress, a factor in human affairs that cannot be dispensed with. The misery of it is evident enough: that cannot be exaggerated; to think of it is heart-breaking. But it is not in human power to abolish it, or greatly to mitigate its sorrows. The utmost we can do is to study the apparent design of the working Providence, co-operate with that, throw the least amount of obstacle in its way, and trust that, in the fullness of time, the desired end will be achieved.

Let the doctrine of this discourse be understood. It is not a doctrine of fatalism or indifference; it is not cold, or heartless, or unbelieving. It casts no chill reflection on the sympathetic feelings of humanity, discourages no fine impulses, discountenances no generous experiment. It simply makes a distinction

between impulse and method, between the propelling force and the machinery. Of love there is none too much; there cannot be too much. Compassion, pity, human sensibility, right and gentle-mindedness, are not, and never have been, in excess of need. To increase them should be the diligent effort of all who would make the world richer and sweeter than it is. There is too much selfish love of money and ease, too much indifference to the welfare of others, too much thoughtlessness for others' misery, too much irrecognition of the claims of the community at large. The feebleness of the sympathetic instinct is one of the evidences of very partial advance in the social development of mankind. But were all the fine qualities augmented ten-fold, they would confer no ability to deal wisely with the problem before us. The question, How shall the poor be treated? is not a question for generosity to answer, or philanthropy, or the tender wisdom of the heart. It is a question on which, more than on any other, the light of experience and of knowledge is required.

There are some who say: Leave the problem of poverty to the solution of the social laws; leave the poor alone to the operation of natural conditions; give up devising plans for their relief, and learn to do nothing. They that speak in this way are humane men, who have ears quick as any to the cry of dis-

tress, and hearts sensitive as any to the appeal of misery. They see more suffering as the fruit of interference than as the fruit of apathy. The quickest way, in their judgment, out of the predicament, is the way appointed by Providence; the way painful and slow, but sure, of social evolution. They are deep believers in God. If they forget anything, it is the fact that human progress is not left to natural laws, unless the natural laws are understood to include man; that social science deals with human beings, and supposes the action of human thought and feeling; that the divine power operates not in chemistry, or mechanics, or the law of demand and supply, as characteristically as it operates in the heart and will of intelligent creatures. Warmer, then, be that heart! more consecrated and persistent that will! But let both be subservient to the large reason which should preside over all.

THE DEVOUT LIFE.

A

SERMON

BY

O. B. FROTHINGHAM.

PREACHED IN

LYRIC HALL,

SIXTH AVENUE BETWEEN FORTY-FIRST AND FORTY-SECOND STS.

February 14th, 1875.

NEW YORK:
D. G. FRANCIS, 17 ASTOR PLACE.

1875.

was enough. The sending of the heart's feeling out towards the Supreme was devotion, a genuine, unexpressed consecration of all one's self. We speak of the "devotional" part of the Sunday services, meaning that part of the exercises which awakens or expresses the sense of gratitude, trust, desire, obedience, towards the Absolute. The phrase, "Sunday service," conveys the idea of sacrifice. No service is rendered, according to the usual sense of the word. People sit still in their places, listening with more or less sympathy to spoken prayers, and hymns sung by a choir. They do nothing, but are supposed to be consenting to the worship and committing their hearts to the guidance of the priest. It is hard to associate devotion in the original deep sense of the term, the devotion of times when men said, "We will not bring to the Lord that which has cost us nothing," with the listless performance of well dressed people sitting in luxurious pews, in fashionable churches, and mechanically repeating printed prayers after a priest, or with the idle moments spent alone in a boudoir with a testament and psalter. This is the last dilution of a great idea. But it is so much as that; and in its name it bears the trace of a noble origin.

The essence of devotion is consecration; the renunciation of private wishes, the sinking of self in something larger and nobler, the surrender of the

particular to the general, the private to the universal, the personal to the absolute. In all religions and phases of religion this is the essence of it. The devout life is the life consecrated inwardly to universal ends. It is conscious communication with beings higher than ourselves, a communion more or less intimate, more or less permanent, but conscious, purposed and sought. To establish this interior communion and to express it, mankind resort to practices as need, feeling or habit suggest, setting apart hours for prayer, retiring at fixed times to reflect and meditate, reading books of prose and poetry, singing in company or alone, assuming lowly postures, mortifying and humiliating themselves, impressing upon their hearts the image of their nothingness. The devotee of the East tries to lose himself utterly in his deity, withdrawing from all human concerns, fixing every thought on the absolute in which he would fain be absorbed. The devout Catholic cultivates a feeling of intimacy with the virgin and saints, reminding himself of their favor and protection of which he stands in constant need. The devout Protestant is assiduous in his endeavor to maintain unbroken the spiritual intimacy between himself and the Christ who is the source of his interior life. The Theist, for whom the virgin has no reality, and the saint no existence, and the Christ no office, but who adores a pure intelligence of absolute holiness

and goodness, takes pains to preserve a becoming posture of mind toward him; by acts of prayer, praise and aspiration.

Consecrate yourselves to God, all ye youths and maidens,
Ere the world benumb your feeling or sin your conscience;
Know that others have found God, as ye have not yet found him;
But seek ye after him, and ye shall find him also;
Seek him in the open field or in the shrouded wood,
Under the evening sky, or in the solitary chamber,
Take with you words, and turn to him and speak.

Auguste Comte and his disciples, though believing in no God beyond or apart from humanity, confessing no spiritual world as others do, adoring no absolute perfection like the Theist, still cling to the idea of devotion, and have practices for increasing it. Comte prescribed hours and habits as strictly as a priest of the Church of Rome, and in his own case used them, opening his heart daily to the influences of his patron saint, to whom he ascribed every sweet quality of his nature, and from communion in thought with whom he professed to derive a power he had not in himself. Devotion, he says, consists in the daily adoration of the best types which we can find to personify humanity, taking into account the whole of our private relations. "Each man should begin his day by a due invocation of his angels. This alone can dispose us to the right use habitually of all our power." Comte recommended three distinct offices

of worship: in the morning an invocation, at midday a recognition of sacred presences, at night before going to sleep an acknowledgment of help and defence, —the three exercises occupying two hours. He speaks at length and with deep earnestness on this matter, enjoining practices of devotion with a minuteness that could not fail to run into formalism. And those who profess discipleship in the religion of humanity which he founded are in sympathy with him here, making endeavors to keep alive within their bosoms a feeling of grateful dependence, and humble co-operation with the Great Being whom they adore.

From this we learn that devotion is not peculiar to any form of religion, that it is confined to no church, is conditioned on no articles, is indeed independent of what is technically called religious faith. They may cherish it who are out of the pale of every communion. It is simply *conscious concurrence between the individual and the universal;* and the universal is, and ever will be, the same, let the conceptions of it disappear as they will. Devotion is not ecclesiastical; it is human. It is the need and the privilege of every intelligent heart to enjoy intercourse with beings multitudinous in number, and noble in degree. The privilege, I say, and the need. For without devotion, in its genuine sense, in its pure inward sense, life inevitably becomes thin and barren, dry and dusty. In

New England, at present, the springs are low, and a cry of distress is heard, from drought. And they who have paid attention to the subject declare that the scarcity of water is due to the destruction of the forests which protected the soil against the withering heat of the sun, and allowed the moisture to gather into pools and streams. To such a degree do health, strength, and life itself, depend upon unseen sources of supply. When all is said, our solid magnificences are products not forces, not causes but results. They are as much transient effects of thought as the successive growths of foliage and bark are effects of the light and heat from the central orb. As the flowers and bushes and trees, aye, and the ranges of the Rocky Mountains, and the peaks of the Sierra Nevada, are made up at last of atmosphere, and are resolvable into gas, so men and women live and increase by assimilating the light of truth and the heat of love; live by reaching up towards the sunny heavens and by opening their hearts to the influences that proceed thence; and when those influences are not absorbed, the bloom of the world blackens, and the globe of humanity begins to swing heavily in the air, a huge icy ball; vitality becomes low, and beauty perishes; art and literature feel the chill, and goodness, losing its quality, loses all but its name; the human in humanity dies; no grandeur of civilizations, no wealth of

industries or inventions, no apparatus of knowledge, no show of sovereign sway over the powers of nature, no skill to make the winds messengers or ministers of the flaming fire, will in the smallest degree compensate for that high interior feeling that is born of meek contemplation, of earnest desire for nobler attributes, of warm sympathy with regenerating powers. In all conditions of the world, men have found it to be so, and there is no reason to think they will find it otherwise, even till the end of time.

The cultivation of this interior life is associated in the experience of men with calm hours, tranquil places, sweet natural haunts, groves and hill-tops, with beauty of landscape, the morning tenderness, the evening glow, the midnight stillness, the sound of sweet music, high thoughts of noble people, gentle thoughts of good ones, memories of hope and sorrow, of disappointment and expectation. In a word, devotion is associated with the richest passages of life—with the opposite of everything like noise, conflict, care, and vexation. The most delicious spots of the Old World owe their charm to it; the loveliest characters of the former days owe their grace to it; the holiest dignity of men and women is traceable to it. It seems as if the memory and practice of it ought to be forever dear to us. Why have they ceased to be so?

May it not be that devotion has been cultivated too technically, too absorbingly, as if it were a separate and distinct interest? That it has been, cannot be denied, nor can it easily be denied that such cultivation of it is fraught with grave mischiefs and even serious evils. Devout exercises have been allowed to consume far more than their proper share of time; instead of two or three hours in a day, most of the hours, the most precious hours, nay, all the hours for many days, sometimes for months and years, being given to them—whole lives being consecrated to them as if they were the chief and only concern. Such exclusive cultivations of devoutness have been, moreover, accompanied by a lamentable waste of mental power, some of the most useful intellectual faculties being allowed to fall into disuse, and others perverted from their natural bent, being, if possible, worse than wasted—a vague, dreamy, vacant, half-bewildered condition taking the place of keen intelligence. This is a deplorable evil, from which many a fine mind has suffered irreparable harm. The intellectual world cannot afford to lose so much hardly-earned force, even though it be sent up in the form of incense to heaven. Another mischief, really less grave, though more palpable, is the divorce of the ideal from the practical life which excessive devotion causes. The devout life is brought into competition with the life of

business and duty, to the great detriment of the latter; existence is deprived of its strenuous workers. This is no imaginary danger, but a very real one.

I took up, not long since, a book of sermons by living Catholic priests of New York. The volume contained one discourse by the most eloquent preacher of the company, entitled "The Saint of Our Day." I opened at once at that, and read. "The saint of our day," said the preacher, "is not the saint of yesterday or the day before: he does not live on the top of a pillar, or in a cave, or in a cell. He does not scourge himself with whips, or starve himself, or wear rags, or put on a hair shirt, or tie a rope about his waist. He lives in a house like other people, and wears the best clothes he can buy. St. Simon would be sent to Bloomingdale or the Island; St. Francis would be arrested as a vagrant; even the princely St. Charles would have on him the eye of the police for collecting crowds of beggars in the streets." So far very well. What the saint of our day is not, is clear enough. But what *is* he? When we put this question, we are made to feel one of the mischiefs of excessive devotion that I have indicated. The preacher, instead of describing a modern man of lofty sentiment and consecrated life, presents as a model—Joseph, the father of Jesus! Not a historic man at all—not so much of a man as the most shadowy saint of history—a person-

age who figures chiefly in pictures as riding on an ass, or leading by the bridle an ass on which his young wife is seated, or leaning against the wall of his workshop looking tenderly at his baby. Such a description of the saint of our day would seem to imply that he is an unknown and imaginary quantity. The fault in the good Catholic is, that the idea of devotion has so completely excluded the idea of practical devotedness that the link between them has been lost.

To illustrate this point further, I took up a discourse by a Protestant High-churchman, eminent in ritualistic circles, on the service that ritualism renders to woman. Here was an appeal of the most modern and the most practical kind—an offer to establish a connection between a religion of devout ceremony and spirit, and one of the most agitating topics of the day. I read the discourse with interest and expectation, being myself persuaded of the importance of the question treated. Judge of my disappointment, when it came out that the great service rendered by ritualism to woman consisted in providing her with altars to dress, altar cloths to embroider, chapels to adorn, and priestly robes to fashion! When devoutness issues in such tawdry absurdity as this, who can wonder that it falls into disrepute?

The devout life, as popularly esteemed, the conventional type of the devout life, is not attractive to the

popular mind. The devoutness and the life are not associated. So much devoutness, so little life; so little devoutness, so much life—would appear to be the rule. Every step in devoutness is a step out of existence. The devout man must withdraw from terrestrial affairs; he must not be an actor, though called to the stage by a genius as imperative as Jefferson's or Booth's; he must not be an opera-singer, though gifted with a voice like Campanini or Formes; he must not play the violin at a theatre; he must not be a rope-dancer or a juggler; he must not frequent or encourage popular entertainments; he must not dance; he must not read novels; he must not play at billiards or games of chance; he must look on business as a necessary evil, must beware of its excitements, must distrust its prizes, must withdraw from it as soon as circumstances allow him to do so—that is, when he has amassed money enough for *himself:* in a word, he must bury his talent, if he have one, in a napkin, and deprive the world of his working power, his experience, his trained skill, at the very time they are in their best condition. The devout man is expected to pass one seventh part of his time in what is little better than idleness of mind. He must do no useful thing on Sunday; he must not study a science or practise an art; he must not cultivate his garden, or drive in the country, or take his

children to the park; if he reads, he must read dull books; if he sings, he must sing hymn tunes; if he goes out, he must attend church. Here are faculties, released from ordinary duty, needing recreation; devoutness requires that they shall be refused it. Here is opportunity for giving to the people what they sorely demand—instruction, entertainment, cheer, mental refreshment; devoutness requires that the opportunity shall be neglected. When proposals are made to employ a portion of the Sunday in giving scientific instruction to the people, devoutness frowns on the project. When halls are opened, libraries, concert-rooms, art-galleries, devoutness protests, and takes pains to thwart the designs of worldly people who desecrate the Sabbath by learning and teaching useful knowledge. This is very discouraging. When devoutness thus becomes indolence, when the devout life is but another name for devout death, it is not surprising that earnest people lose faith in it and dislike it. It really is not venerable, admirable, or respectable.

But why confound the use with the abuse, the superstition with the faith? Why go to the other extreme, and repudiate the very principle which gives devotion its sweetness and dignity? This is what we are doing. We are cutting down the forests without care for the water-courses. The devout life, we say,

is out of date: devoutness is an obsolete quality. We let the water-courses take care of themselves; our business is to multiply saw-mills. As to communion with unseen sources of influence, if it is necessary, it will be provided for, as the mountain vapors are, by the atmospheric laws. Our concern is to make the water turn our wheels when it comes down. We have a motto—an ancient and venerable one, a monkish one too: "Laborare est orare," "Work is prayer." But are we sure of that? Is all work prayer? Is work of necessity prayer? Is it prayer, in the sense of *conscious* aspiration? There is a great deal of strenuously devoted life that is not devout life. The pleasure-seeker works hard; is his a devout life? Dives is devoted to the making of money; is his a devout life? George Stevenson was devoted to the improvement of machinery; was his a devout life? Goodyear was devoted to the perfection of india-rubber fabrics; was his a devout life? Turner was devoted to the painting of pictures; was his a devout life? Kane was devoted to Arctic exploration; was his a devout life? Morse was devoted to the development of the electric telegraph; was his a devout life? Why not? These men dedicated body, mind, strength, time, purpose, endeavor, fortune, to the ends they pursued; they consecrated all they had and were to ideas, to

principles, to the effecting of useful designs; they forgot themselves in their work.

Yes, they did, *in their work*. But did they forget themselves in the *end* of their work? Did they forget themselves in the community for which they worked? Did they forget themselves in the anticipated well being of their kind? Did they work, not directly for themselves, their wealth, fame, power, immortality, but with a conscious and cherished intent, in and through their work to benefit their fellow-men? Did they hold themselves devoted, in spirit, to their fellow-men? Did they live in and for their fellow-men? This is the question. If they did, and just so far as they did, they led devout lives, lives of aspiration, sympathy, and meekness—interior and prayerful lives.

The essence of the devout life is the conscious resignation of the personal will to the general, the submission of the private to the universal. This is finding the life by losing it. But this, we say, is an exploded idea, wild and mystical, having no pertinency to modern experience. We men of to-day must regulate our actions and motives by a very different rule. Yes, by an opposite one. Every man of us is taught, by sharp necessity, to look out for himself, to assert himself, to make himself the centre of the universe, to sacrifice to himself, if necessary, the

general, the universal, the absolute. Ours is the epoch of self-assertion. Individuality is the law under which we find ourselves ordained to live, and through the perfect working out of individuality we trust that the general harmony will result. Let each seek his own interest, and the interest of all will be served. Our favorite mottoes are: PRIVATE JUDGMENT—SELF-WILL—EVERY MAN A LAW TO HIMSELF. And these mottoes, we are told, are inconsistent with that upward direction and interior consecration of the mind which devoutness requires.

But are they incompatible with it? Is it necessary that, in order to make the most of one's self, one should live sentimentally in himself, should refer everything to himself, and never himself to everything?—should become a "mountainous me," and insist that the gulleys and pebbles on his side shall determine the course of the irrigating and regenerating streams? For my part, I cannot see the much-asserted incongruity. On the contrary, the demand for self-assertion in our age directly suggests the demand for meditation and reflection to balance it, and prevent life from toppling over on the selfish side, as it did formerly on the unselfish. Indeed, the very mottoes that have been cited, and that affirm so absolutely the modern principle, contain in their phraseology the idea they are used to repudiate. Weigh them

word by word, and see if they do not, see if our individualism does not repudiate itself on the very terms it employs to assert itself. Take them one by one.

Private Judgment.—The two terms stand for the two elements: the element of the personal, and the element of the absolute. Judgment, that is fixed and unchangeable. That stands for the experience of ages, the conviction of successive multitudes of mankind. That is the everlasting decree, which was before us and will be after us; which stands over us in transcendent majesty, and is reflected within us in the most constant persuasions of our minds. That is essential, cardinal, supreme There is but one judge, whose intelligence and moral order are impressed on the works of creation. There is but one judgment, the primary truth of things. But this judgment is to be ratified and accepted by each man, freely, on his heart's private motion; no other can judge for him; he is not to be handed over to judgment, bound hand and foot; he is, by deliberate consideration and reflection, to recognize it, applaud it, sanction it, confess allegiance to it, and in so doing take on himself its grandeur, enjoy its freedom, and share its glory.

Take the second motto, Self-will. There it is again. The word "will" suggests something more solid and permanent than the fitful or even the steady impulse of a private heart. It is one of the most impressive

words in the language. The forces and laws of nature are but symbols of it; it is identified with our primary notions of the supreme power. There is nothing capricious or partial about it, that we may change, contravene, or struggle with it. The moral convictions of the human race attest it; the veneration of the human race clothes it with authority. Individual will is nothing till it comes into concurrence with this; it is only whim and impulse till then. The poet says:

> "Our wills are ours, we know not how,
> Our wills are ours to make them thine."

But this connection with the great Will each individual must make for himself, spontaneously and of his own motion. This is his right, his privilege, his duty. His self-hood has no support until he does. Unless he establishes this connection, his life is evanescent as a cloud; he passeth away as a shadow, as a post that hasteth by; as a ship that divideth the waves of the sea, which instantly close up behind it, leaving no trace of its pathway in the waters; as a bird that flyeth through the air, which yields to the stroke of its light wings, and parts for an instant to let it through, but immediately erases every sign of the swift passage; as an arrow that darts and sings on its deadly way, but leaves unbroken the atmosphere it tears in its course,—so is the man who flaunts his

wilfulness in the face of Will, and through the vast web of the eternal cuts his way to a private end. He is an idle trajectile across the surface of the earth.

Once more, the close association of the particular with the universal comes up in the other watch-word of our age, that each man must be a "LAW TO HIMSELF." Mark that word Law, the most tremendous word of our time; word which science enunciates in a hundred voices; word that resounds through the solar system; that reverberates among the constellations; that thunders through the epochs of history. It is taken up by one department of human affairs after another; nation shouts it to nation; man whispers it to man; the still small voice murmurs it over and over in thoughtful breasts. It is the word of might in our generation. It stands for something not mine nor yours, but, as we say, God's. Well for us, best for us, all in all for us, if we, like little children, learn to repeat it with sincere lips, learn to press it like a lamp to our weak breasts, learn to wreath about it our frail moral purposes, learn to brace against it our trembling will. A law to ourselves! Yes, *this* law to ourselves; this law which binds us to the eternal, and makes us free with the jubilant motion of righteousness. We are a fast people, but we have not distanced the creative power; we are a loud people, but we have not hushed the still small voice. Our civilization, superb though it

be, is still but a little wild flower on the fields of humanity. Whatever we may outgrow, we can never outgrow the old habit of holding the invisible hand as we go on our way.

So much for the philosophy of devoutness: so much for the principle that countenances it; the very speech we use in repudiating it rebukes us. The practical importance of it needs no argument. There can be no question that life would be richer, calmer, steadier, more even, more serene, more loyal, more dignified, more honorable, if the practices of the older faiths and the recommendations of the newer could be revived; if in good faith and fresh feeling the prescriptions even of Auguste Comte might be obeyed so far that certain hours should be set apart for communion in thought with spirits higher than our own. At times the sterility and superficialness and frivolity and shiftlessness of modern life strike us so forcibly, that no language weaker than Wordsworth's fine sonnet gives expression to our feeling.

"The world is too much with us; late and soon,
Getting and spending we lay waste our powers;
Little we see in Nature that is ours;
We have given our hearts away, a sordid boon!
This sea that bares her bosom to the moon;
The winds that will be blowing at all hours,
And are up-gathered now like sleeping flowers;
For this, for everything, we are out of tune:

It moves us not. Great God! I'd rather be
A pagan suckled in a creed outworn,
So might I, standing on this pleasant lea,
Have glimpses that would make me less forlorn,
Have sight of Proteus rising from the sea,
Or hear old Triton blow his wreathed horn."

And this is only the poet's sigh for sympathetic communion with Beauty. The sigh of the human being for sympathetic communion with Intelligence, with the spirit of Truth and Holiness, with the Being of whom Beauty is but a single attribute, is, or should be, much deeper. The sailor, in mid-ocean, must take his bearings from the sun, otherwise his knowledge of navigation will avail him little to keep on his course. But the art of sailing the sea is simple as compared with the art of steering a straight course over the waters of ordinary existence, rendered dangerous as they are by the multitudes of vessels whose tracks continually cross one another, by the rocks and reefs that are barely hidden by the thin covering of ocean, and by the storms of wind and lightning that rage over its wide expanse. How is it possible for any to hold steadfast way through life's moral perils, if they do not occasionally report themselves to the controlling agencies, present themselves before the presiding laws, and impress on their minds again and again the claims of the uncreated sanctities on their allegiance? How shall the merchant, the capitalist, the manufacturer,

the trader, the politician, the holder of trusts, keep himself high-toned in honesty and honor, if he consults only the impulses of the hour, and yields to the solicitations of interest as opportunity presents or occasion suggests them? Or how, in humblest places —chief of all, in humblest places, because in these we are most off our guard—at home, in the intercourse with familiars and intimates, amid the vexatious cares, the petty controversies and disagreements that all have to encounter, is it possible for men and women to maintain an even temper, a clear judgment, or a gentle will, if they rely only on the natural dispositions of an untrained and neglected mind? Life, in any relations, is too much for people who trust to their natural gifts. Here, as in the case of the intellectual powers, gifts must be educated and disciplined; and here the indispensable discipline consists in sincere and habitual reference to the powers that are consecrated by the common consent of mankind. As a great writer says, with entire truth: "How welcome would it often be to many a child of anxiety and toil, to be suddenly transferred from the heat and din of the city, the restlessness and worry of the market, to the peaceful garden or the quiet mountain retreat! And like refreshment does a high faith, with its infinite prospects ever open to the heart, afford to the worn and weary: no laborious travels are needed for

the devout mind"; for it carries within it Alpine heights and starlit skies, which it may reach with a moment's thought, and feel at once the loneliness of nature and the magnificence of God."

It is a mistake to think that this exercise, possible and actual once, is neither possible nor actual now. It is both. The men of high-toned, serene, incorruptible natures may be fewer than such used to be. But where such are found, they will be found conforming to this ancient law of communication with higher powers. If we could get near the heart of men and women whose lives of courage and denial for philanthropy's sake have made them noted in their time, the reformers who have been true to humanity though their fidelity brought to them neither money nor fame nor influence, people who in the fight with social evils have preserved the calmness and sweet serenity of their souls, we should find that they habitually referred to the overshadowing principles of truth embodied or unembodied, refreshed and strengthened their hearts by their contemplation, and calmed themselves in their peace. Not by prayer perhaps, nor by help of closet hours, though that is not so probable, but in the seclusion of thought they have kept open the intercourse between their private hearts and the life that inspires all good hearts, and have been mindful never to lose their hold of the unseen hand.

It is impossible to read the life of a man like Charles Lamb, an altogether modern man, and not feel that he, though far enough from being devout in the ecclesiastical sense of the term, did in the period of his deep anguish on account of his insane sister and his devoted service to her, touch more than frequently the silent sanctities that stood round his trembling will.

But for the danger of becoming too personal, I should describe others—one a man of letters, one a man of affairs, one a man who has seemed to take pleasure in outraging religious conventionalities, but whose nobility shows itself in deeds of lowliest service to the lowliest people—who, though apparently regardless of customs and prejudices, do, after their own manner, press their breasts against the bosom of the Eternal, and lose all sense of personal grief and pain in the feeling of sympathy with the soul of humanity. The evidence of this communion is in their faces, their manner, their expression. As the countenance of the early disciple betrayed that he had been with Jesus, so does the countenance of these reveal the fact that they have been on the Mount of Vision.

In Raffaele's immortal picture of the Transfiguration, in the Vatican, the story is told in two scenes. On the mountain-top the Christ, transported with feeling, enveloped in light, of glorified aspect, communes with

Moses and Elias, the lawgiver and the prophet in whom the soul of his nation was embodied; at the foot of the mountain an insane man writhes and wrestles, in an excited crowd who witness with terror the frenzied action of the creature possessed by the evil spirits. The scenes are as opposite and as incongruous as can be imagined, and hasty critics declare that one part of the picture kills the other. But the artist felt the two to be one, as they are—one through the close relation between the rapture above and the horror below. The transfigured one casts out the demon: he alone can. It is the serenity of heaven that causes peace on the earth. Either portion of the painting would be incomplete, nay, unintelligible, without its counterpart. The transfigured Christ is a lovely picture, but too remote from every day sympathies to be instructive. The victim of demoniac possession would be too hideous to contemplate apart from all thought of his relief. The sympathy between the victim and the saviour is the soul of the work. The transfiguration would be aimless if its glory did not touch the valley depths: the agony would be incurable if left to ordinary resources. Each refers to the other, and demands the other. The Son of Man ascends to glory that he may descend with power.

DATE DUE

AUG 1 5 2000

JUL 9 2001

MAY 1 5 2001

MAY 1 7 2007

GAYLORD

PRINTED IN U.S.A.

GTU Library
3 2400 00388 6391

GTU Library
2400 Ridge Road
Berkeley, CA 94709
For renewals call (510) 649-2500
All items are subject to recall